



PS3  
PlayStation 3

PSP  
PlayStation Portable

PlayStation 2

PlayStation Network

# PlayStation®

Special Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 54 APRIL 2011  
100% Australian Content

REVEALED! ▶

## PSP2

10 reasons why Sony's  
Next Generation Portable  
will blow you away!

VERDICT! ▶

## HOMEFRONT

Bearing down on Black Ops,  
but how short is *too short*?

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THE R18+ DEBATE: DISCOVER WHAT THEY'RE NOT TELLING YOU!



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IN STORES MARCH 24TH



COVER STORY

# Duke Nukem Forever

## The king returns 46

Damn, those alien bastards are gonna pay for shooting up our ride, stealing our chicks and making us wait 12 years to kick their asses. Welcome back to your gaming heritage.



### 34 Bulletstorm

Here's a forecast for you: a hail of bullets aimed at your face (and possibly your genitals). We grab a kevlar broly and investigate this gory shooter.



### 52 Introducing the PSP2

The successor to our favourite seven-year-old handheld is upon us. We take it apart piece by piece and run away before security can get to us.

#### ON THE COVER

##### 36 Skyrim

Mess with us and you're a dragon's marshmallow

##### 38 Fight Night Champion

Featuring the eye of the tiger and the thrill of the fight

##### 46 Duke Nukem Forever

What were we waiting for, Christmas?

##### 62 We Make A Game

Our Three Stooges put their heads together

##### 68 Homefront

Korea invades the USA, we answer the call of duty



### 68 Homefront

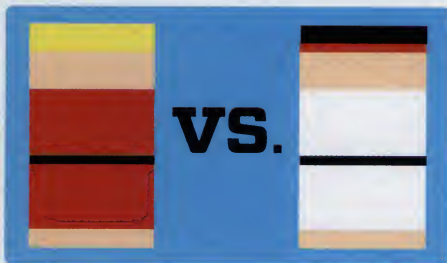
With the *Tomorrow, When The War Began* movie still fresh in our minds we size up Kaos Studios' offering and see if it's worth going to war over.





## 16 Top 10

Nowadays every game out there is 'unleashed', or 'untamed'. We dare to ask the question: why?



## 14 In Your Face

Ken vs. Ryu. It's the age old argument that will never be solved. We give it a shot anyway.



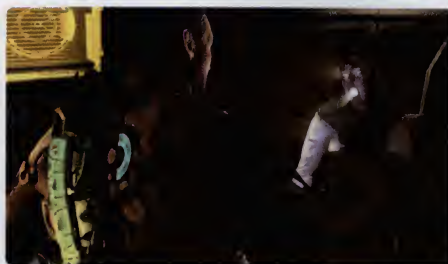
## 24 Opinion

OPS ex-pat Mr. Mark Serrels returns to remind us how videogames can be a fountain of youth.



## 62 We Make A Game

We've played us some games in our time. We thought it was time to try our hand at making one



## ► Page 84

### Dead Space 2 online

We all know it is mustard in single-player, but does it translate online?

## ► INSIDER

### In Short

All the essential news nuggets delivered as one tasty column

### Insider

Sony shifts a metric buttload of consoles

### In Reality

Virtual cars > real-life ones?

### Infocus

A closer look at the best upcoming PS3 games

### Top 10

The worst uses of the word Unleashed in a game title

### In Your Face

A great debate will rage here every month

### Insane

We have some fun at somebody else's expense

### Around the World

Gaming news and events from the far reaches of the globe

### Calendar

A month and a bit of essential activities and releases

### Release Schedule

An up-to-date list of all upcoming and recently-released PS3 titles

### Opinion: Mark Serrels

An old videogame can transport you back in time

### Opinion: Dave Kozicki

Staunch *Bad Company 2* fan defects back to CoD

### Opinion: Angry Sackboy

Should first-person shooters come with their own caddy?

### Inbox

Your thoughts, letters, and feedback from the web and email

### Subs

Want to get your copy of OPS cheaper and faster? Here's how

## ► REGULAR

### Internet

News, online reviews and DLC roundup

### Insight

Hints, tips, tricks and cheats for the latest games

### Intermission

DVD, Blu-ray, PlayStation Store and cinema reviews

### Index

Your essential guide to the very best – and worst – games out there

## ► FEATURES



### Duke Nukem Forever

We travel to Las Vegas, Nevada to reacquire ourselves with The King himself. Has he still got it after all these years?

### PSP2

The future of handhelds is here and in your hands. Well, not yours. Ours actually. But we can still tell you why it rocks

### Civil Disobedience

Australia's R18+ rating sure is taking a heck of a long time to pass. We discover what they may not be telling you

## ► PREVIEWS



### Bulletstorm

34

### The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

36

### Fight Night Champion

38

### Dark Souls

39



### Call of Juarez: The Cartel

39

### DiRT 3

40

### Batman: Arkham City

41

### The Darkness II

41

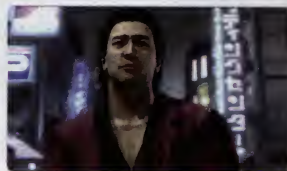
### Top Spin 4

42

## ► REVIEWS

### Homefront

68



### Yakuza 4

72

### Test Drive Unlimited 2

74

### DC Universe

76



### Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds

78

### Stacking

80

### Spare Parts

80



### Back to the Future: The Game Episode 1

81

### Plants vs. Zombies

81

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## Meet the team

**Paul Taylor**  
**Deputy Editor**

Why this fetching scarf again? Because I am off in London experiencing their lousy Smarch weather.

**Playing:** *McC3*

**Wanting:** *Deus Ex: HR*

**Stephanie Goh**  
**Art Director**

I've been designing up a storm this month. It's good to see the king returned to us after all these years. Hail!

**Playing:** *Stacking*

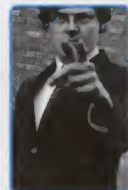
**Wanting:** *Uncharted 3*

**Adam Mathew**  
**Associate Editor**

In Vegas I fired an M249 SAW and walked The Strip with a yardie full of spirits. America, yer aIIIIII right.

**Playing:** *D.N.F.*

**Wanting:** *Mass Effect 3*

**James Cottee**  
**Contributor**

Capcom's indecision on launching the new *Monster Hunter* in the west has driven me to drink (more than usual).

**Playing:** *Killzone 3*

**Wanting:** *Borderlands 2*

**James Ellis**  
**Contributor**

I've been contemplating therapy. I'd like to be able to throw, "My therapist told me..." into conversations.

**Playing:** *MvC3*

**Wanting:** *Mass Effect 3*

**Nathan Lawrence**  
**Contributor**

I've been hankering for some *Skyrim* spanking. Finally an RPG that offers me latitude for beard attitude.

**Playing:** *Killzone 3*

**Wanting:** *Uncharted 3*

**Dave Kozicki**  
**Contributor**

After a whirlwind trip to LA, my head's still spinning. Decimating the Helghast is the perfect cure for jetlag.

**Playing:** *Killzone 3*

**Wanting:** *Brink*

**Toby McCasker**  
**Contributor**

I said it in 2009 and I must say it again: *Dragon Age* is the tits. Haha, random bisexual orgies. Oh dear.

**Playing:** *Dragon Age: Origins*

**Wanting:** *Dragon Age II*

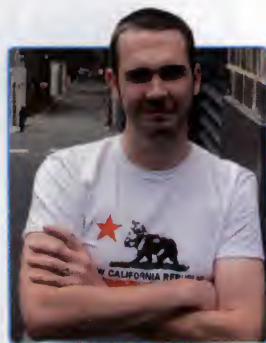
**Angry Sackboy**  
**Contributor**

Angry Sackboy's hate-filled rants have decreased slightly since the arrival of *LittleBigPlanet 2*. Slightly.

**Playing:** *LBP2*

**Wanting:** *L.A. Noire*

## Editorial



The axing of *Guitar Hero*, and the cancellation of *True Crime*, are discouraging signs for gamers looking for more than just Christmas blockbusters. Any increased disinterest in publishing games not destined to move multiple millions of copies will mean bad things for those of us who desire more than just the latest instalments of gaming's most-bankable franchises.

"Over the past two years, we have seen rapid declines in the music genre, and unfortunately, based on current demand, we simply cannot continue to profitably make these games given the considerable licensing and manufacturing costs," reads an Activision statement.

*Guitar Hero* was strip-mined so it's not surprising the ride is over. Still, is it just me or does it sting that *True Crime* was cancelled but *Magical Zhu Zhu Princess: Carriages and Castles* – also published by Acti – is not?

Some gamers have expressed concern that the *Call of Duty* franchise could eventually go the same way as *GH*.

I like *COD*. I'm not really an online multiplayer guy but I enjoy the polished single-player campaigns. *COD* also always ships with four-player splitscreen – a relic of the pre-broadband era for some but essential for those who grew up when local multiplayer was king. I love having mates around for a few stubbies and some four-player splitscreen madness and *COD* is an essential ingredient of any such evening.

It's unlikely *COD* could ever go the same way as *GH* because it's not really possible Activision could exploit it in the same fashion. What Activision did with *GH* has been described by some analysts as the "hit it and quit it" model – carpet bomb the market with cheaply produced sequels and bug out when the profits shrink up. *GH* may be deader than disco now but it was an immense success for Activision. From its 2005 debut to 2009 *GH* generated more than \$2 billion in revenue.

*COD* titles are far more complex creatures to develop than *GH* games so I doubt we'll see the same level of saturation. Gamers will continue to tolerate one main release a year.

No. What would undo *Call of Duty* is the same thing that undid *Tony Hawk's*: a better game.

There are plenty of would-be usurpers for *COD's* throne out there. *Battlefield 3*, *Homefront* and whatever it is the *Call of Duty* alumni over at Respawn Interactive are working on are all contenders, so *COD* cannot afford to be complacent.

**Luke Reilly**  
**Editor**

**Playing:** *Homefront*  
**Wanting:** *L.A. Noire*

## SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? Love? Wrong. A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotches? No. Please stop abusing our rhetorical system.

The answer we were looking for is: an *OPS* subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic.

**TURN TO PAGE 32**

## Editorial &amp; Design

**Editor**

Luke Reilly

**Deputy Editor**

Paul Taylor

**Associate Editor**

Adam Mathew

**Contributors**

James Ellis, James Cottee, Anthony O'Connor, David Kozicki, Toby McCasker, Jared Mallia, Andy Astruc, Nathan Lawrence, Clint McCredie

**Art Director**

Stephanie Goh

**Creative Director**

Paul Cook

**Publishing****& Circulation****Circulation Enquiries**

(02) 9186 9114

**Advertising & Marketing****National Business Manager**

Nikki Turnbull

(02) 9186 9104

**How to contact us**

**Tel** (02) 9186 9186

**Fax** (02) 9186 9187

**Email** ops@citrusmedia.com.au

**Official PlayStation Magazine**

PO Box 20154

World Square

NSW 2002

**Want to subscribe?**

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**Management****Director**

Jim Flynn

**Financial Controller**

Stuart Harle

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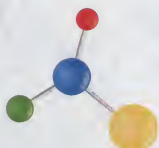
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## This Month

- 12 In Reality  
Supercars
- 13 Infocus  
*L.A.Noire*
- 14 Win  
*Yakuza 4*
- 15 Infocus  
*Virtua Tennis 4*
- 16 Top Ten  
Unleashed games
- 17 Infocus  
*Final Fantasy XIII-2*
- 18 In Your Face  
A great debate
- 19 Insane  
It should be a game
- 20 Around the World  
Global gaming snippets
- 21 Calendar  
This month and beyond
- 22 Release schedule  
The big list
- 23 In Their Words  
Quotes from the industry
- 24 Opinion  
Mark Serrels
- 26 Opinion  
Dave Kozicki
- 28 Opinion  
Angry Sackboy

“The PS3 install base of hardware in Australia is now over **1.1 million devices**”

# Unstoppable

PlayStation 2 marches past 150 million units worldwide

The PlayStation 2, the world's best-selling videogame console, has reached another massive milestone. As of February 2011, Sony's official tally for PS2 consoles sold worldwide stands at 151.12 million.

Its closest competitor is the Nintendo DS, hovering somewhere around 145 million but likely to slow following the arrival of the Nintendo 3DS. The next nearest devices are the Game Boy and Game Boy Colour (just under 120 million combined) the original PlayStation (102.5 million) and the Nintendo Wii (approximately 85 million at present).

To put 150 million in perspective, that's like you, your granny, your baby niece – every single human being in Australia – buying around six PS2s each. Wow.

The PS2 has cemented its place as the Terminator of games consoles (pops up everywhere, impossible to kill) an unprecedented 11 years after its debut. To be still manufactured 11 years after it was released is impressive but it's the numbers that stun.

Sony's recently released quarterly financial results indicate that hardware sales for the PS2 have changed little over the past few years. In fact, sales of the console have been near as strong as they were a year ago – so strong that in some cases it outsold the PSP. Sony forecasts

it will have sold six million PS2s by the end of the current fiscal year, which has one more quarter to run.

That's six million consoles, close to four years after *God of War II* (its last decent game) and the arrival of the PS3. To put that in perspective, the total number of Sega Dreamcasts sold was 10.6 million. Sony is estimating that it will sell more than *half* that number over a *decade* from launch.

Its rock-bottom price and the lack of backwards compatibility in current PS3 consoles likely helps a lot, but there's no denying that it's the best value entry level console around. For younger kids and those new to gaming the vast software library for PS2 contains more classics than you'd ever have time to play (and the best bit is the games are cheap as chips these days).

In local news, Sony Computer Entertainment Australia has revealed PS3 achieved the number one place in terms of value and year on year value growth, representing 27% of the approximate AU\$1.7 billion industry (accounting for AU\$469 million across more than five million units of PS3 product).

The PS3 install base of hardware in Australia is now over 1.1 million devices in Australian homes. PSP is over 675,000 and the PS2 has reached over 2.6 million units.



## In Short

A brief look at this month's news



- ▶ Activision has cancelled **True Crime: Hong Kong** one day after last issue's glowing preview on the promising title. It has also discontinued development on its **Guitar Hero** game for 2011. Activision will have no new music games or skateboarding games this year. Activision has also announced it will release seven per cent of its workforce, which is around 500 people.
- ▶ A six-issue **Batman: Arkham City** miniseries will be available in May, linking the storyline of *Batman: Arkham Asylum* to the new game.
- ▶ **No More Heroes** publisher Marvelous Entertainment has revealed the company has decided to cancel an "epic RPG" that was in development for PS3. The cancellation should come as a surprise considering Marvelous never announced anything in the first place. Marvelous teased of an original IP for "new hardware" back in 2010.
- ▶ **NBA 2K11** has become the best-selling 2K Sports game ever. The cancellation of *NBA Elite 11* has likely helped, but it is a fantastic title.
- ▶ MTV Games has sold **Rock Band** developer Harmonix and has closed down. Harmonix has laid off an undisclosed number of full-time employees (reportedly approximately 12 to 15 per cent of the studio's 240-person staff) but future projects and upcoming downloadable content for *Rock Band 3* are said to be unaffected.
- ▶ Namco Bandai has announced **Ridge Racer Unbounded** and describes it as "very different from the *Ridge Racer* you've come to know." *Ridge Racer Unbounded* is being developed by Bugbear Entertainment, creator of the excellent cult-favourite racing series *FlatOut*.
- ▶ The excellent but under-promoted **Enslaved** has sold just 460,000 units across the globe in the three months following its release. Don't bet the ranch on a sequel. Developer Ninja Theory is now hard at work on *DMC*, a reboot of Capcom's *Devil May Cry*.
- ▶ La-La Land Records and EA have teamed up to create an eight-disc, ten-hour-long compilation of all the original scores from the **Medal of Honor** series.
- ▶ Disney's **LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean** should arrive sometime this winter.
- ▶ A former developer at DMA Design way back when the British company was working on the very first **Grand Theft Auto** has revealed the game was almost canned.
- ▶ The Interactive Games & Entertainment Association has released figures showing a decline in the Australian games industry in 2010. Sales have dropped 16 per cent from 2009.
- ▶ **Red Dead Redemption** has sold 8 million units.
- ▶ Namco Bandai has announced it has secured exclusive North American rights to publish games based on the **Power Rangers**. In other news, the Power Rangers are still actually a thing. A thing that people actually desire the rights to produce games for.
- ▶ EA was reportedly shown a prototype of a **Mirror's Edge** sequel but has declined to pursue it at this stage.



# ► IN REALITY

## Supercars: Better or worse?

As seen in: *As seen in Test Drive Unlimited 2, Gran Turismo 5, etc.*

We were recently invited to a special *Test Drive Unlimited 2* track day, thanks to Namco Bandai Partners, where we were able to test a variety of real-life supercars on a closed road course.

We were able to fang about in a Mercedes Benz SL55 AMG, an Aston Martin V8 Vantage, a Ferrari 360 Spider, a Lotus Elise CR, a Porsche Boxster 987 and a Ferrari California on loan from Sports Car World Rentals.

What did we learn about supercars? They're fast. They're beautiful. They're as awesome as your inner 12-year-old is telling you they would be. We discovered we could fit into even the smallest ones. At over 6'4" Luke was slightly concerned that inside an open top Elise he'd look like he was in a speedboat rather than a car, but his fear was unfounded.

We found out the sound of an Aston will put chest hairs on your chest hairs and the feeling of utter refinement inside a California absolutely astoundes.

Also, they're all completely hopeless.

Not only do they cost a fortune to buy, they cost a fortune to run. You're going to need to offload a few of your non-vital organs in the first place to afford one, but unfortunately you're going to need at least lease the rest of them to keep it running.

Do you know how much a set of Bridgestone Potenza RE070Rs – a tyre specially tailored for the Nissan GT-R – cost? More than your first car. Possibly more than your current car.

That's if you don't break it. The GT-R on the day had a fault light appear and had to

### ► The Farm

The Farm is a stunning 5.1 kilometre ribbon of tarmac drooped over a large block of land near Peats Ridge, north of Sydney. Owned by the former CEO of Coca Cola Amatil the lengthy private road resembles a tarmac rally stage more than a racetrack, with intimidating embankments rather than lengthy run-offs. The course has slightly mythical status amongst rev-heads who have heard of it. That's due the secrecy that surrounds it and the fact that it's strictly invitation only. Sports Car World Rentals of Sydney are regular visitors so, if you're eager to see it for yourself, you'd best scrape some coin together and contact them.



Why does Bond drive these things? There's no back seat!

be retired. You can't just call out Lube Mobile to sort that out. You need top men on the case.

Then there's the fuel. They use lots of it. Then there's insurance. That'll be astronomical. Then there's driving it fast around a track. Your insurance won't cover that.

But that's owning a supercar. What about behind the wheel?

That's when things get turned up to 11.

No current videogame, *Test Drive Unlimited 2* or otherwise, can emulate the teste-satchel exploding sensation of piloting a \$600,000 car down a road no thicker than a driveway, barrelling towards a 90 degree corner as your speedo eases over speeds nearing 200km/h. The California is actually a grand tourer but that doesn't mean it doesn't go like a stabbed cat. The California has a top speed of 310 km/h and it can go from zero to 100 in under four seconds.

Sims like *GT5* get close but after driving these cars it's clear that videogames struggle to capture not only the sense of speed but also the feeling of grip. Videogames all too often fall into the trap of struggling to feel fast, and it's hard to really feel grip without g-forces (unless you put your lounge on some kind of automated see-saw).

So owning a supercar is kind of a pain. As romantic as it sounds, it's easier to settle for a digital one; it's infinitely cheaper and far less ball-ache. Games have real-life by the curlsies on that one.

But driving a supercar? No contest. Games don't even come close. There aren't many experiences equal to mashing your foot to the floor in a car worth more than a family home and driving games still have a way to go before they can match that.

# ► NUMBER CRUNCHING

# 62 billion

◀ The number of virtual soldiers killed by all players of *Black Ops* to date

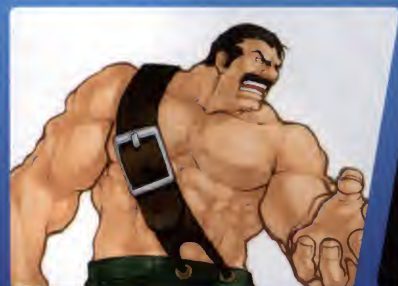
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▲ The number of weeks it took *GT5* to move 190,000 copies in Australia and become the best-selling PS3 exclusive title down under so far



## Separated at Birth!

NO. 25 Mike Haggart: meet the only man you could ever lend you gigantic single suspender to – Don Frye



Few men have the raw physical traits required to make them a dead ringer for everybody's favourite pro-violence mayor. If you really wanted to hire somebody to be Haggart in a movie – or even an actual street brawl – you'd hire Don Frye on the spot. Don is an All-American MMA fighter, and while he doesn't have the dress-sense to wear his belt up over his shoulder, he's as close as our reality will ever come to housing a legend like Mike Haggart.



## ► INFOCUS

## L.A. NOIRE

Since the woeful FMV shenanigans of the '90s the boundary between live-action movie and videogame has become an off-limits line. With *L.A. Noire* Rockstar and Team Bondi barely pause at the barrier; casually stooping and crossing it with all the cool grace of a detective entering a cordoned-off crime scene.

Blending an expansive open-world recreation of LA with the undeniable attraction of the fedora-era '40s, Team Bondi looks to be Johnny-on-the-spot with the noir atmosphere. Drawing heavily from both plot and aesthetic elements of film noir this is one adult story that has the potential to be awash with crime, sex and moral ambiguity. Don't let your role as a cop fool you into thinking this will be like *GTA* meets *Driving Miss Daisy*, some of the dirtiest rats out there also wear a badge. Like any good mystery, a lot of *L.A. Noire* is lurking beneath the surface. We simply can't wait to take it in for questioning.





# SO YOU WANT TO BE A ... WRESTLING MAYOR?

## OPTION 1

**R**ight. That's a bit of a niche, isn't it? There aren't any actual wrestling mayors, unless you count Jesse 'The Body' Ventura, but he's American. Still, anything's possible.

To be a mayor you need to be elected into the position, either directly by the local population or by members in the council. They are sometimes figureheads, and can't bring any direct changes into their constituency without approval by the council. Generally, you'd have experience in local government or even State government, then put yourself up for mayor. However, you could be councillor and then mayor, and it's a process that doesn't require much time to get to.

Stephen Yarwood, Lord Mayor of Adelaide, is the youngest Lord Mayor of Adelaide at the age of 39. However, Tim Smith and Steve Staikos have been elected mayors of Stonnington and Kingston cities respectively. They are both 26.

It's harder to be a professional wrestler. Greg Bownds, a professional wrestler who runs the Australasian Wrestling Federation school and [awfwrestling.com.au](http://awfwrestling.com.au), admits it's hard to forge a career in Australia.

You need to be at least 16 to begin to learn, purely because before this time your body isn't ready. It takes one year to complete your training at the AWF school, and you have to train outside of your time in class as well.

It's not just physical skill that's important, as you need to be able to remember important directions and focus so you stay safe, for yourself and your opponent. As with all sports you need to do cardio, weights and eat properly – you don't just rock up and start to wrestle. After that it's key to get your personality and attitude right – in and out of the ring.

It's not a lucrative way to make money. Opportunities are slim, and Bownds says "I think there's only myself that's a full-time professional wrestler! For everyone else it's a weekend hobby or a sport. I tell all our guys if you can make a bit of money as you progress consider it a bonus."

## TIME:

There's no youngest age on being a mayor but you need to have a head for bureaucracy and, if you're in a high-profile locale, the ability to handle the media for as many years as you're elected. You need to spend a year in wrestling school, with approximately eight hours of training during the week. Some people can wrestle for up to 20 years. Both are ongoing commitments.

## OPTION 2

Turn on *Final Fight Double Impact* or *Marvel vs. Capcom 3*

## TIME:

60 seconds

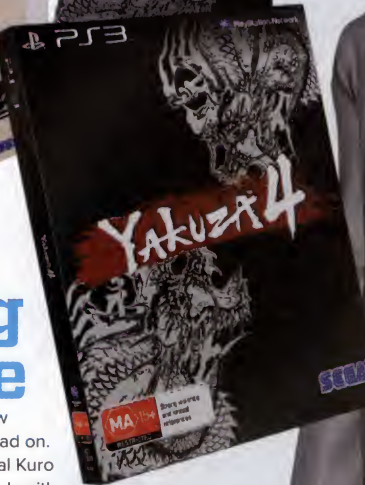
## ► NEWS Denied?

**SHIFT 2:** *Unleashed* producer Marcus Nilsson dodged our question whether the game would have any local Holdens or Fords in it last time we spoke.

It seems he did so because the answer was no. At least, it looks that way. The car manufacturer list has been revealed and Holden is nowhere to be seen. There doesn't appear to be any Falcons in the Ford section either.

Bathurst without any Aussie V8s? What is this, EA, *Race Driver GRID*? We haven't been able to discover whether it's a licensing issue or a case of the can't-be-bothereds.

DLC then, EA?



## ► COMPETITION

# Yearning Japanese

Desperate for a copy of the epic new underworld adventure *Yakuza 4*? Read on. Thanks to Sega we've got five special Kuro Editions of *Yakuza 4* to giveaway, each with an Ichiban box and a T-shirt. Want to get your hands on one of these very limited edition prize-packs? Answer the following question and following the entry instructions to the right. Check out our review on page 72 if you need convincing.

**Question:** What sort of noodles would real Yakuza order and why?

## HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions email your entries to [ops@citrusmedia.com.au](mailto:ops@citrusmedia.com.au) with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 04/05/2011. Winners will be notified by mail.





## ► INFOCUS

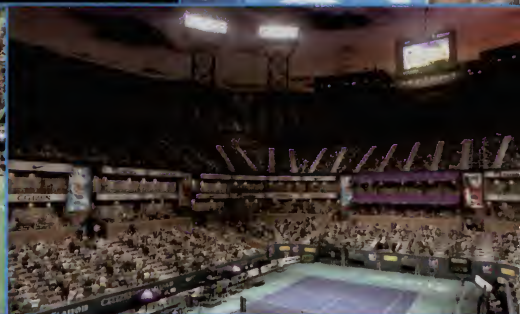
## VIRTUA TENNIS 4

**W**e've got three words for you: tennis elbow ahoy. Thanks to the amazing amazingness of the PlayStation Move every swing of the racquet can be performed like you would in real-life.

Surprisingly your left and right movement is handled automatically but you still have to drop back or rush to the net by physically stepping back or forward. It sounds kooky on paper, but there's actually a very intuitive camera system in place

here. For example, when the ball is in the other half of the court, your viewpoint pans back so that you can see your position. When the ball is coming towards you, it glides seamlessly into a first person viewpoint where you can smash it back in a timely fashion.

Gone forever are the allusions to bad '80s *Pong*. With motion-based gaming tennis games have finally aspired to become true Grand Slam experiences.





## TOP TEN

# Tackings-on of the word **Unleashed**

Got a game that concerns fairly boring things and/or is a sequel to a previous title that needs to be differentiated in an exciting new way? No worries! Take your product and slap a nonsensical *power-word* on the end!



## 1 Shaun Murray's Wakeboarding Unleashed

Wow. Just, wow. You're a wakeboarder in this game. Being constantly *leashed* to the arse-end of a boat is a fairly integral part of the process, if not the whole point entirely. For Activision's marketing department to ignore this fundamental fact when naming the game boggles the mind. If the player was 'unleashed' they would probably drown. You'd be left playing *Shaun Murray's Wake: Unbreathing*.



## 2 Godzilla Unleashed

Here's another doozy. When has Godzilla EVER been on a leash to begin with? Homeboy is a skyscraper-sized lizard. Can you imagine the sheer logistics of trying to build a choker-chain big enough? Even if you could get it on him, what would you attach it to? He *eats buildings*.

## 3 Jaws Unleashed

We're assuming the creators of this meant a metaphorical, mental 'unleashing' of Jaws' rampant taste for raw people seafood (hushi). You could never leash a shark, they need to move in order to breathe. Tie him up and you create *Jaws Fin Soup: Flavour Unleashed*.



## 4 Scooby Doo Monsters Unleashed

Monsters, by their design, are meant to be freaky, thoroughly untethered beasts. To suggest their lack of a leash is a fairly stupid statement of the obvious. It's like wasting space on your DVD cover to say *Pornstars Unvirginal* or *Gary Busey Unhinged*.

## 5 SHIFT 2 Unleashed

Winner of the most WTF unleashing ever belongs to this game. What exactly is being unleashed here? Gear shifting? The cars in general? Who leashes a car?! If you're worried about them rolling away, they come with handbrakes. Just sayin'.



## 8 Sonic Unleashed

We know what SEGA shot for here. "The blue dude with 'tude is *hip*, he's with it [*'Macerena'* dance] dukka, dukka, dukka". Uh, yeah you know what? He isn't unleashed in this. Half the game has him as a werewhog with stretchy arms that can't run fast. Shoulda called it *Sonic Unbalanced*.



## 9 Star Wars The Force Unleashed

Technically the Force is an energy field created by all living things that penetrates us and binds the galaxy together. You can't leash that. That's like trying to bottle karma. And, as we all know, karma is portioned out equally by the cosmos.



## 10 Destroy All Humans Big Willy Unleashed

We love a dick joke as much as the next man named Johnson but we've got our limits. If you're not familiar with this title, that's because it's a canned PS2 game. That's right folks, prospects were so dire for this not even the application of the word 'unleashed' could make it look marketable to the money-men. That's one shit game.



## ► INFOCUS

## FINAL FANTASY XIII-2

In a surprising move of boldness Square Enix is returning to the scene of the crime in order to take another shot at *Final Fantasy XIII* following its mixed-reception. The publisher has proudly trumpeted that this new instalment will "exceed *Final Fantasy XIII* in every aspect: namely, a brand-new story which stems from the previous title as well as a battle system which has evolved further since *XIII* – and more".

This plot of this final (read: not final, at all) fantasy takes place after the events of *Final Fantasy XIII*, with its overall storyline set to be darker than the original. The game will feature Lightning as the main protagonist once again, along with other returning characters who will return "with major and unexpected changes".

We're quite willing to forgive Squenix a misstep or two. *Final Fantasy XIII-2* can make it up to us all by offering some much needed closure on the closing scenes of the last game. Will Lightning be happy?



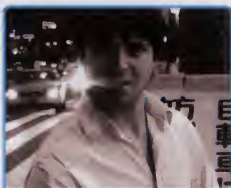


## ▶ IN YOUR FACE

# Who is the eternal Street Fighter?

The epic struggle of Ken and Ryu is the stuff of schoolyard riots. Let's continue that brawl in a text-based format.

# VS.



James Ellis

## KEN

James was born and raised on *Street Fighter* and hasn't been seen since he discovered Ken was absent from *Marvel vs. Capcom 3*.

*Street Fighter* isn't about lobbing blue goop, it's about mashing your opponent's face into a chewed Picnic bar. Kenneth Masters, the Arian prince of hamburger and apple pie, knows this.

I'll concede old Ryu has been given a touch up by the powers that be for *Street Fighter IV*. But it's desperate charity by the Japanese Capcom to make sure its company icon is no longer a three-legged greyhound.

Besides, Ken is the people's champ. Get any punter behind a joystick and they'll retreat to the same fortress of dragon-punching solitude. Someone reliable. Someone who can bring home the gold and knock a hummingbird out of the air. That would be the blonde keg of wham. That'd be Ken Masters.

Anyone who has ever dropped their change into a cabinet of biff knows Ryu is an introverted punching-bag humper with the personality of a biscuit baked by a robot. And someone call the Smith Family. He's homeless and lives in a cardboard box.

Ken, on the other hand, looks like an '80s rock god who forges Harley Davidsons from his sweat and engages in naughty marathon sessions with his smokin' wife, Eliza.

Not only does Ken rule in life, he also rules in a fight. The street fighting cock-and-roll king has a hurricane kick that could dice Fort Knox into chicken stuffing and a dragon punch with such massive fiery range its offspring might just be the El Nino effect.

What can one expect from Ryu?

Hadouken. Hadouken. Hadouken. Hadouken. Pause. Hadoken.

To see who should win the argument of Ken versus Ryu you need only look at the damning legal precedent that is *Arse versus Class*. The victorious case of the latter defendant has since paved the way for similar decisions in the cases of *Talk v. Walk* and *Style v. Substance*.

If I may use a barnyard simile here: Ken is the show horse with a Salon Selective mane and a collection of pretty prances designed to make immature girls swoon. He is the sort of horse that Matell applied glitter to and based their My Little Pony range on.

Ryu on the other hand is a stoic Clydesdale; a pure, ploughing machine designed to tear shit up and leave a constant, unbroken line of destruction in his wake. He's the type of horse that (awe)inspired car manufacturers to base the power measurement of their engines upon.

Ryu is the modern personification of Japanese Bushido – which, translated into English, means "the way of the surly, headband-wearing ball-buster" [citation needed]. He needs no possessions, no title-belts, no reach-around from the general public. As such, he is a vagabond drifter much in-line with the narrator in Bon Jovi's 'Dead or Alive'. Yeah, he may not have a six string on his back, or a steel horse to ride. But I can guarantee you that he's seen a million faces and rocked them all. With his fist.

As for his gratuitous use of fireballs: they're designed to keep lesser beings at a distance. Thank whatever god you pray to that they do such a good job at preventing you from coming within Ryu's (death)striking distance.



Adam Mathew

## RYU

Adam spends most of his time training, although his incredible powers continue to attract criminals who want to exploit him.

Want to hear more of the OPS team disagreeing with each other? Check out our Podcast available on side B of our cover disc. Want to get into a great debate with one of us, or a fellow reader? Hop onto [www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia](http://www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia) and make your case. The best topics may find their way into the magazine.



**FORGIVING MAKE IT ALREADY.**



**PRE-ORDERS SHOULD UNLOCK  
THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERS**







# Around the World in PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



## ▲ DADDY'S GIRLS

USA UTAH, USA

Can videogames with dad build better daughters? A new study out of Brigham Young University's School of Family life suggests yes. Researchers found that girls who played video games with their fathers were better behaved, felt more connected to their families, felt less aggressive and demonstrated decreased levels of internalising, which can lead to depression. The effects aren't seen in boys, a fact that researchers suggest might be due to boys playing games much more than girls do and often with their friends.



## ▲ BULLETSTORM

USA VIRGINIA, USA

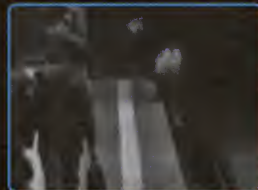
In a case of life imitating videogames a Virginia man has invented a device that tells you how many bullets are left in a magazine. The small digital display on the device itself (which attaches the side of your weapon) is not unlike an ammo counter in a first-person shooter. The demonstrations of the invention show its very accurate, keeping count of even long bursts. The man behind it has already begun receiving requests for the unit. All he has to do now is invent a device to reload all your half-empty magazines into full ones with the press of a button.



## ▲ DRIVE ANGRY

UK MIDDLESEX, UK

A new study out of Continental Tyres UK branch has found that people who spend a lot of time playing driving games are more dangerous when they're behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. The study specifically cited *Gran Turismo* and *GTA* as two games that had a bad influence on players. The study asked 2,000 motorists (half gamers, half non-gamers) between 17 and 39 on their driving habits. However, does this mean that videogames can make you a bad driver or that reckless rev-heads are simply attracted to games with cars in them?



## ▲ TRAINING INJURY

ITALY MILAN, ITALY

A 10-year-old boy in Italy was saved from possible death by a fast-acting off-duty cop after walking off a railway platform while playing his PSP. The distracted kid was too fixated on his PSP to realise he was close to the edge of the platform and fell straight off the side and onto the tracks at the Loreto station in Milan. 23-year-old off-duty police officer Alessandro Micalizzi quickly sprung to his rescue, fetching the winded boy before a train arrived and it was game over for both of them. No word on whether the PSP survived its tumble.



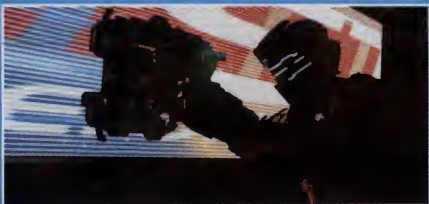
## ▲ THAT'S TEAMWORK

QATAR DOHA, QATAR

Did the PSP topple Australia's chances of scoring some soccer silverware? Japan's Asian Cup win is being attributed to the team's young players and new coach, Alberto Zaccheroni, but it's also being reported that there might be another reason for their chemistry. Apparently between six and eight players were getting together for some *Monster Hunter* on PSP. Star player Keisuke Honda began joining in for these co-op gaming sessions and some are saying it resulted in him changing his attitude and becoming more of a team player.

## INTERNATIONAL TOP 10 CHARTS

### EUROPE



- 1 **Dead Space 2** EA
- 2 **LittleBigPlanet 2** Activision
- 3 **Gran Turismo 5** Sony
- 4 **FIFA 11** EA
- 5 **Assassin's Creed Brotherhood** Ubisoft
- 6 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 7 **Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit** EA
- 8 **Just Cause 2** Square Enix
- 9 **Batman: Arkham Asylum** Eidos
- 10 **Mass Effect 2** EA

### JAPAN



- 1 **Dragon Age: Origins** Spike
- 2 **Gran Turismo 5** Sony
- 3 **World Soccer Winning Eleven 2011** Konami
- 4 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Square Enix
- 5 **Tales of Graces f** Namco Bandai
- 6 **Castlevania: Lords of Shadow** Konami
- 7 **BioHazard 5** Capcom
- 8 **Sports Champions** Sony
- 9 **Assassin's Creed Brotherhood** Ubisoft
- 10 **Atelier Totori** Gust

### USA



- 1 **LittleBigPlanet 2** Sony
- 2 **Dead Space 2** EA
- 3 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 4 **Mass Effect 2** EA
- 5 **Two Worlds II** SouthPeak
- 6 **Red Dead Redemption** Rockstar
- 7 **DC Universe Online** SOE
- 8 **Sports Champions** Sony
- 9 **Gran Turismo 5** Sony
- 10 **NBA 2K11** 2K



# THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!



Mar 2

## Blu-ray releases

*The Social Network* and *The Town* are released on Blu-ray today. Jesse Eisenberg stars as Mark Zuckerberg in this interpretation of how Facebook started, while Ben Affleck portrays a bank robber in Boston. He's actually really good.



Mar 10

## Dragon Age II

BioWare, the masters of the Western RPG, release *Dragon Age II* today. The game was not made available to us to review in time for the actual release date so look out for it in the next issue of *OPS*.



Mar 12

## Future Music Festival

No, it's not something that's been transported through time in a stainless steel coupe. Dizzee Rascal, The Chemical Brothers, MGMT and many more play tonight in Sydney, followed by Melbourne on the 13th and Adelaide on the 14th. Go to [www.futureentertainment.com.au/futuremusicfestival/](http://www.futureentertainment.com.au/futuremusicfestival/) for more info.

Mar 11

## NRL

The Roosters play the Rabbitohs at SFS and the Broncos play the Cowboys at Suncorp Stadium in the first round of the NRL, starting at 7.30pm tonight EST.



Mar 13

## Formula 1

The first race in of 2011's Formula 1 season starts in Bahrain, at 3pm local time. No matter where you are in Aus or NZ, you're going to have to stay up late to watch the race. Go Webber!



Feb 24

## Machete

Danny Trejo stars in Robert Rodriguez's action comedy flick *Machete*, as, er, Machete. Trejo's an ex-cop turned renegade looking for revenge after his family was killed. It's high action, low on brains, but good fun.



Mar 24

## AFL

It's Carlton vs Richmond in tonight's first match of the AFL season. Tune into Channel Ten from 7.10pm for all the action!



Mar 31

## SHIFT 2 Unleashed

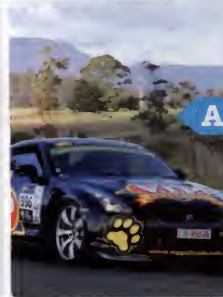
EA's sequel to the under-loved *Need for Speed SHIFT* (it was excellent, why didn't you buy it?) hits today, and it has *GTS* in its sights. We're excited for two reasons: night racing and Bathurst are in it. Full review next issue.



Apr 5

## Targa Tasmania

For six days a host of exotic classics, supercars, and sports sedans in touring, sports and GT classes will race over 2000 kilometres on Tasmania's roads. This tarmac rally shows off the cars as they were meant to be driven, in a showcase of style and speed. You can be a spectator for free! Go to [targa.org.au](http://targa.org.au) for more info.



# Can't miss...

2011 Formula 1 Qantas Australian Grand Prix  
**MARCH 27**

The mighty Formula 1 series has its second race of the season today in Melbourne. Mark Webber passed the finish line in ninth place last year - be ready to see him take the chequered flag. We have faith!





# Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

## OUT NOW

**Test Drive Unlimited 2**  
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** EA  
Namco Bandai Partners

**Marvel vs Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds**  
Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** THQ

**Bulletstorm**  
Genre: Shooter  
**Distributor:** EA

**de Blob 2**  
Genre: Platformer  
**Distributor:** THQ

**Killzone 3**  
Genre: Shooter  
**Distributor:** Sony

**LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars**  
Genre: Action-adventure  
**Distributor:** Activision

**Apache: Air Assault**  
Genre: Flight  
**Distributor:** Activision

**Nail'd**  
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** QVS

**GTAIV: The Complete Edition**  
Genre: Action-adventure  
**Distributor:** Rockstar

**DC Universe Online**  
Genre: MMORPG  
**Distributor:** Warner Bros.

## MARCH 2011

**Fight Night Champion**  
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** EA  
Date: March 3

**Dragon Age II**  
Genre: Action RPG **Distributor:** EA  
Date: March 10

**Homefront**  
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** THQ  
Date: March 17

**MotorStorm Apocalypse**  
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Sony  
Date: March 17



**Top Spin 4**  
Genre: Sport **Distributor:** 2K  
Date: March 18

**Crysis 2**  
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** EA  
Date: March 24

**Yakuza 4**  
Genre: Action RPG **Distributor:** Sega  
Date: March 24

**Sniper: Ghost Warrior**  
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** AFA Interactive  
Date: March 25

**SHIFT 2 Unleashed**  
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** EA  
Date: March 31

**WWE All Stars**  
Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** THQ  
Date: March 31

**Yoostar 2**  
Genre: Party **Distributor:** AIE  
Date: March TBC

## APRIL 2011

**Michael Jackson The Experience**  
Genre: Dance **Distributor:** Ubisoft  
Date: April 14

**Mortal Kombat**  
Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** Warner Bros.  
Date: April 20

**SOCOM 4: Special Forces**  
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Sony  
Date: April 21

**AFL Live**  
Genre: Sport **Distributor:** HES  
Date: April TBC

**PlayStation Move Heroes**  
Genre: Adventure **Distributor:** Sony  
Date: April TBC

**Portal 2**  
Genre: Puzzle **Distributor:** EA  
Date: April TBC

## MAY 2011

**Duke Nukem Forever**  
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** 2K  
Date: May 6

**L.A. Noire**  
Genre: Action-adventure  
**Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** May 20

**F.E.A.R. 3**  
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Warner Bros.  
Date: May 25

**DiRT 3**  
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners  
Date: May 25

**Dungeon Siege III**  
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Ubisoft  
Date: May 26

## JUNE 2011

**Child of Eden**  
Genre: Puzzle **Distributor:** Ubisoft  
Date: June TBC

**Hunted: The Demon's Forge**  
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners  
Date: June TBC

## SEPTEMBER 2011

**Resistance 3**  
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Sony  
Date: September 6

**RAGE**  
Genre: Adventure **Distributor:** TBC  
Date: September 16

## NOVEMBER 2011

**Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception**  
Genre: Action-adventure  
**Distributor:** Sony  
Date: November 4

**The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim**  
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** TBC  
Date: November 11

## TBC 2011



**Batman: Arkham City**  
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Warner Bros.  
Date: TBC

**Tomb Raider**  
Genre: Action-adventure  
**Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC

**Deus Ex: Human Revolution**  
Genre: Shooter/RPG **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners  
Date: TBC

**inFAMOUS 2**  
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Sony  
Date: TBC

**Bodycount**  
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners  
Date: TBC

**Warhammer 40K: Space Marine**  
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ  
Date: TBC

**Spec Ops: The Line**  
Genre: Action **Distributor:** 2K  
Date: TBC

**Mass Effect 3**  
Genre: Action RPG **Distributor:** EA  
Date: TBC

**Metal Gear Solid: Rising**  
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Mindscape  
Date: TBC

**Agent**  
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Rockstar  
Date: TBC

### ► Limited Edition

## BRINK

A man-made floating city called the Ark, made up of hundreds of separate floating islands, is on the brink of all-out civil war. Originally built as an experimental self-sufficient and 100% "green" habitat, the reported rapid rise of the Earth's oceans has forced the Ark to become a refuge for humanity. Crammed with the original Ark founders, their descendants, as well as tens of thousands of refugees, the Ark exists in total isolation from the rest of the world. With 25 years of social unrest, the inhabitants of the Ark have reached their breaking point. It's up to you to decide the future of the Ark and the human race.



**EB GAMES \$108**  
'UAC' and 'Cacodemon' Bulpdaun SMG skins  
'Doom' bandana, 'UAC' Beanie cap  
'Hellspawn' tattoo  
'UAC Body Armour' tee and 'Screaming Soul' tee

**JB HIFI \$109**  
**Pre order bonus**  
'Caesar' Revolver  
Soda Can Silencer and 'ArkTactical' Silencer  
'The Grin' face Mask  
'Tortured Soul' tattoo

**GAME (web only) \$89**  
Vault 101 and FNV Vault Boy  
Carb-9 SMG skins  
'Fallout' Bandana  
'Vault-Tec' Beanie Cap  
'Vault 101' tattoo  
'FNV Vault Boy' tee, 'Vault 101' tee



#### The Last Guardian

**Genre:** Adventure **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** TBC

#### Ace Combat:

##### Assault Horizon

**Genre:** Flight **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC

#### Alice: Madness Returns

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** EA **Date:** TBC

#### DmC

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** TBC

#### Driver: San Francisco

**Genre:** Racing **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC

#### Brink

**Genre:** Shooter **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC

#### Silent Hill: Downpour

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** TBC

#### Max Payne 3

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** TBC

#### Operation Flashpoint:

##### Red River

**Genre:** Shooter **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC



Operation Flashpoint: Red River

#### Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

**Genre:** Platformer **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** TBC

#### Red Faction:

##### Armageddon

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** TBC

#### SSX: Deadly Descents

**Genre:** Racing **Distributor:** Activision **Date:** TBC

#### Final Fantasy XIII-2

**Genre:** RPG **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC

#### ► Pre-order

## CRYSIS 2

Whether you play it in stereoscopic or standard 2D, *Crysis 2* drops players into a devastated New York in the midst of an attack by a frightening alien species. Surrounded by catastrophic destruction, players harness the superhuman abilities of the Nanosuit to level the playing field in this shooter from Crytek, becoming the ultimate weapon on a mission to save New York.

#### Limited Edition includes:

**Bonus XP** – Players will jump into multiplayer battles with an edge by starting with enough experience points to gain early access to all five preset class load-outs.

**SCAR Hologram Decoy** – This special attachment to the SCAR will project a hologram image of the player, allowing them to confuse their opponents with the decoy.

**SCAR Weapon Skin** – This digital camouflage skin will allow players to add a personalized touch to one of the more popular assault rifles in the game.

**Platinum Dog Tag** – This special one-of-a-kind dog tag is one of over 250 that will be collectible in *Crysis 2* multiplayer.

**Alcatraz Figurine (pictured)** – Produced by First4Figures, this figurine of Alcatraz on a New York taxi features unique lighting effects as seen on the Nanosuit 2.

**Nanosuit Backpack** – This generously sized backpack will hold a 17" laptop.

**Studio Art Book** – Designed and produced by the Crytek studio team. Featuring over 150 pages of exclusive art and commentary documenting the games production.

EE GAMES \$198

Estimated dispatch date: 24/3/2011

#### Battlefield 3

**Genre:** Shooter **Distributor:** EA **Date:** TBC

#### The Lord of the Rings:

##### War in the North

**Genre:** RPG **Distributor:** Warner Bros. **Date:** TBC

#### Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon:

##### Future Soldier

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC

# In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"It's kind of like when you meet a girl. 'Would I do her or not?' You can make that decision in five seconds, and the customer's going to do the same thing"

A randy Randy Pitchford on a good game.

"At this point I have no desire as a developer and zero desire as a gamer to see the next generation come out where I'm sitting right now"



Ken Levine on why he doesn't want a new generation of consoles to be released.



"In one cutscene, a woman kneels in front of a male character and appears to perform fellatio – there is no depiction of the sex act"

The ESRB, America's self-regulating classification board, detailing just one of the ways your character can, uh, engage with one another in *Dragon Age II*.

"You don't kill CoD by trying to be CoD. You kill CoD by making a better shooter"

Battlefield 3 gameplay designer Alan Ketrz during a Twitter Q&A on what makes a shooter more successful than *Call of Duty*.



#### ► Limited Edition

## MORTAL KOMBAT TOURNAMENT EDITION

The newest chapter of the iconic fight franchise marks a triumphant return to the series' mature presentation and a reinvention of its classic 2D fighting mechanic. Driven by an all new graphics engine, the fan favourite Fatality is back and presented in more gory detail than ever before. In addition, *Mortal Kombat* introduces a number of new game-play features including tag team and the deepest story mode of any fighting game.

**Tournament Edition includes:** A fight stick, made with high quality, authentic Suizo Happ arcade parts, designed exclusively by NetherRealm Studios. Features the classic *Mortal Kombat* ergonomic button layout and has memory foam on the bottom for comfortable lap use, with a flip open lid for easy arcade part customisation, access and storage.

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# PAIN FROM AN OLD WOUND

You're only young once, but can playing games allow you to recapture the fun of being a kid again?

**1** 992. I'm 11 years old – too old to believe in Santa Claus but young enough to be confused by magic. This is the first time I've stayed up for 24 hours without sleeping. I've never been so excited in my life.

My mum is a nurse and works nights. She usually gets home at around 5am before sitting down with a cup of coffee. That's her ritual. As I lie completely lost in thought in my clockless bedroom, the creaking of the front door is the only sign that time exists.

It's my sign that it is time for me to finally open my presents.

I am 11 years old and I want a Super Nintendo so badly that I can feel the ache at the base of stomach – physically. It's a strange want, selfish but tangible. That morning I woke up, unwrapped my presents and finally got what I wanted, what I had patiently waited for – and it's with the slightest twinge of shame that I say it was probably one of the greatest moments of my life. But it also hurt a little.

If Don Draper, the lead character in AMC's incredible TV show *Mad Men*, is to be believed, nostalgia – translated from Greek – literally means "pain from an old wound". It's a twinge that cuts deeper than memory – it transcends memory. It's a powerful feeling, a longing for a

place or time you simply cannot revisit. No matter how much you wish you could.

Nostalgia hurts, but it's the kind of pain that can sometimes be mistaken for pleasure.


**"It feels incredible to see new worlds through the eyes of a child"**

As much as I love games, I often wonder if I continue to play because I want to go back to that time when I was 11 years old, tearing open my Super Nintendo, clumsily cludging

a cartridge into the slot with my brother. It was a time before I really cared about girls, before I had any real worries. Bills to pay, work to do, people to take care of. A time before I had become aware of all the drudgery that generally plagues our day-to-day life.

Going back to games is generally an escape from that drudgery, but ironically it also works as a reminder that we can never really be children again – that we'll always have to deal with the burdens of adulthood.

Games aren't for children; I think we're long past that. But on some level they're created for people that want to feel like children – or at least some constructed, idealised version of children. Because, even if it's just for an hour or two each night, it feels incredible to see new worlds through the eyes of a child.

But in a strange way, it also hurts. 



**OPINION**  
**Mark Serrels**

Special guest Mark Serrels is the editor of [Kotaku.com.au](http://Kotaku.com.au) and has been mildly depressed ever since fellow Scotsman Andy Murray lost the Australian Open

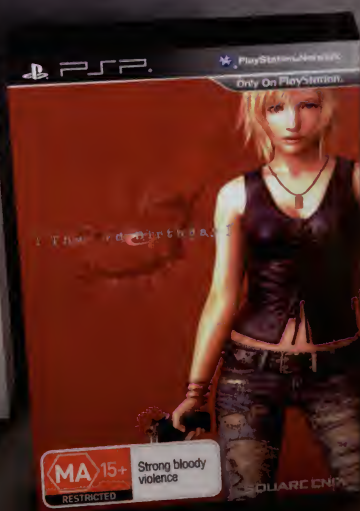


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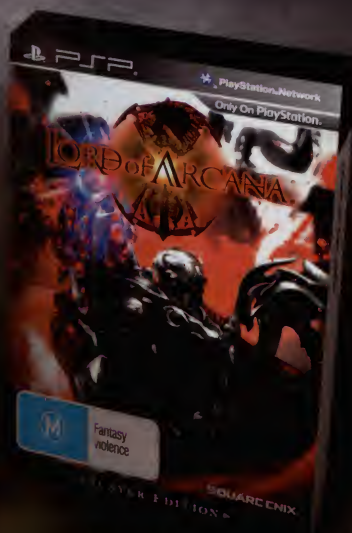
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**SQUARE ENIX**



# CONFESSIONS OF A BLACK OPS CONVERT

Or, how Dave learned to stop worrying and love the bomb

I've made it no secret that I have a hatred of spawn campers in any online first-person shooter. I've also been adamant that the majority of them are pre-pubescent little whelps that tend to populate any lobby dedicated to the *Call of Duty* franchise in any incarnation, hurling abuse behind the anonymous safety of their gamertag. That's not to say they don't exist in other titles – they surely do – but they seem far more rampant in *CoD*.

Throw in the beyond-cheap tactics of treating Capture the Flag (CTF), an objective-based game mode, like Deathmatch and you've got the trifecta. A veritable shit-storm of a triumvirate that not only explains my hatred towards this type of *Call of Duty* gamer, but also reinforces my stance to never ever participate with them in any online arena.

Knowing this, fellow *OPS* scribe Nathan 'Nachos Justice' Lawrence swore that not only would he make me play *Black Ops* in the near future, but that I'd like it as well. Bold words to be sure and on Australia Day, after ingesting several kilos of prawns and the prescribed medicinal brews, my guard was well and truly down. I found myself grudgingly agreeing to having a lash after Nachos questioned my manliness, the nature of my relationship with my mother and my sexuality.


Considering the outspoken love I have for *Bad Company 2* the learning curve was pretty steep, as I adjusted to the significantly smaller maps and breakneck pace. Then something

unexpected happened. I started to like it. The multiplayer just throws XP at you and there are so many different weapons, attachments, Perks and Killstreaks to unlock you're sure to find the right combination to suit your play style. And I eventually did.

There are several disclaimers to add, though. I only play Capture the Flag, and a pinch of Domination or Ground War, with at least some sort of backup from online friends that communicate and work towards the objective. I frequently rage quit due to spawn camping by lobotomised gamers that have no concept of fair play, so they rely on pathetic tactics to make up for their inadequate skillset (and I assume microscopic manhood). I'll add that I often lead scouting parties to make these perpetrators pay for their crimes as I inflict and deliver a dose of sticky Semtex retribution.

I avoid Hardcore mode like the plague, where camping is beyond ridiculous yet, all of these gripes aside, I still find myself coming back again and again nightly for another couple of hours of Ice Cube yelling in my ear, "They've grabbed our flag!" before I run the offender down and fire a ballistic knife to the back of the head with a grin plastered on my dial. In the past, I've never had any problem admitting I've made a mistake, and I may very well have jumped the gun on *Call of Duty: Black Ops*.

So if I've offended any of you in the past with my criticism of the title's multiplayer mode, I wholeheartedly apologise. I get it now. I was overly harsh. I now understand what a blast it is.

However, to those who may feel slighted by my breakdown of their campy play I make no such apology. Rather I insist you heed the following warning: I'll find you. Anytime I feel the flag is secure, I'll track you down. I'll be on you like a pig on a truffle. When I undoubtedly see you prone with a snap-to sniper rifle, enjoy the final three seconds of life as my concussion grenade slows things up and my Steyr AUG double-tap puts you down for the count. Play like a man, little boy. 

"So if I've offended any of you in the past with my criticism of the title's multiplayer mode, **I wholeheartedly apologise. I get it now**"



**OPINION**  
Dave Kozicki

Dave Kozicki has an unhealthy addiction to online multiplayer shooters, playing as a shotgun samurai who regularly abuses teammates for selfish or cheap play. When he's not online, he's an outspoken freelance journalist whose inane rants can be found at [www.rawdlc.com](http://www.rawdlc.com)



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Check the Classification

IN CINEMAS **APRIL 7**





# WANNA MAKE 14 DOLLARS THE HARD WAY?

Angry Sackboy's idea for a revolutionary first-person shooter starts with a helping hand

**T**hey say a flute without holes is not a flute. A doughnut without a hole is a Danish. Similarly, or perhaps not at all, a first-person shooter without guns is not a first-person shooter.

I'd be the first in line to play a first-person non-shooter – really, I would. I was relayed an excellent idea just recently which cast players as a photojournalist in a war-torn country. You'd shoot a camera rather than a gun, avoiding crossfire, IEDs, artillery and air strikes along the way. If somebody ever makes this game please send me a copy. But I digress.

First-person shooters make up most of today's most-popular games, but they're an unnatural beast. Real soldiers don't go into battle with enough hardware and ammunition to occupy Fiji single-handedly. Look at *Black Ops*. There are enough guns in that to give Charlton Heston a partial – and he was cremated three years ago.

To counter this sometimes I like to think that I'm being accompanied by a personal assistant during first-person shooters, like a caddy. My caddy is the one holding all this heavy weaponry for me while I sprint about unencumbered. He's also the one picking up all my discarded magazines and creating full ones for me.

Think about it. In today's shooters you eject a half-depleted mag and slot in a fresh one without even thinking about it. However, instead of getting to the end of your ammo count and finding a bunch of mostly half-empty mags they're all full again.

Who's responsible? Not you; you've been busy shooting people at a *Rambo III* rate. It was your caddy.

He could even offer up helpful advice as you progressed.

"I'd use the sniper rifle for this particular shot, sir," he'd say thoughtfully, smiling and extending your personal long-range murderiser in both hands.

You take it and notice it's gleaming, completely devoid of the muck and brain bits it was smeared with not 30 minutes ago. Your caddy winks.

You shoulder the factory-fresh rifle and gaze through the scope at your prey.

"There's a slight breeze from the south, sir," says your caddy, hands on knees and staring unflinching into the distance. "I'd aim a few inches to the left."

You shout, "Fore!" while squeezing the trigger, something your caddy politely chuckles at. You're subsequently rewarded with the sight of an exploding head.

"Right in the grape – nice shot, sir," offers your caddy, taking the rifle from you and handing over a compact SMG, accompanied by a restrained but genuine high-five.

"This'll be better in the rough," he insists, grinning.

We need a first-person to admit the whole situation is completely ridiculous. How about a completely self-aware shooter; a shooter that makes no attempt to disguise the fact that the whole thing is, in fact, a complex charade?

Parody is horribly under-utilised in videogames and past attempts have been less than satisfactory. I'd love to play a shooter that revelled in its videogame status. [▶](#)

**"Who's responsible? Not you; you've been busy shooting people at a *Rambo III* rate"**



**OPINION**  
**Angry Sackboy**

Angry Sackboy would lug 50 pounds of ice up five, six flights of stairs when he was your age! So what? So let's dance!



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# inbox

## ▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH

# RED DEAD EXEMPTION

Santa knew what I wanted last Christmas: *Red Dead Redemption*. Naturally I was over the moon when it was given to me. VGA Game of the Year and positive reviews all around? How could this powerhouse ever disappoint? Yeah, well that's what I thought. Maybe it's that expectation rule: expect the worst and you'll never be disappointed. But it was *RDR*. How could I ever have expected anything

less than the best? Now without carrying on too much, I just want to clarify some aspects of the game that prevented me from loving it. I emphasise the word love because I did like the game, I just didn't love it. The story seemed to really drag; repetitive mission structure and the endless quests to save your family began to slightly bore me. It was almost always the same: help this guy, so he can give you the name of another guy to help, who can help you kill the guy that you're after. Missions were very similar to each other. Ride alone or shotgun to a mission, get ambushed on the way, get to the mission point, kill everyone, collect or save someone, mission end. I also started seeing weird things in my cutscenes:

People walking straight through horses, and clones (two of the same characters, one standing frozen and the other going about his/her cutscene business.) All that aside, I just thought that everyone loved the game and I didn't. Big deal.

Issue 52: The Science of Hate. That article couldn't have come at a better (or worse) time. I'm now in the middle of a crisis. Am I lingering on the small aspects that shouldn't be lingered on? It's not like I didn't appreciate the scope of the game; visually it was beautiful and the controls were good too. The aspects above just soiled what could have been a great experience for me.

I have reason to give this game a 7 or 8 out of 10, unlike those dumb arse low lives who give a zero just for the fun of it. However from a critic's point of view, are these reasons enough? Or should I put aside my thoughts and love the game for the good aspects it provides?

**Abraham Chalhoub**, via email

**The Science of Hate wasn't about gamers who haven't particularly enjoyed one or more of this generation's most well received titles as much as other people. Enjoyment is relative to your interests and your expectations. You've demonstrated an ability to appreciate *Red Dead Redemption* on a number of important levels. We agree that the scope of the game is mighty, we agree it's quite a stunning visual experience and we agree the control set is robust and well executed. That other parts of the game didn't really impress you is neither your fault nor the game's fault. Different strokes for different folks and all.**

**We were exploring the reasons how and why some gamers can become so militantly incensed by some kind of flaw in a game that it compels them to use a public forum to give a game zero points out of a possible 10 points. It's not useful.**

**One can play *Black Ops* and decide they don't particularly like it. However, can one legitimately argue it's the worst game ever? Personal taste only goes so far. In a world where first-person shooters like *The History Channel: Battle for the Pacific*, *Turning Point* and *Legendary* exist it's just not possible.**

**A gamer doesn't have to like universally acclaimed games anymore than he or she would have to like whatever won the Oscar for Best Picture in any given year. However, if a gamer can't at least see glimpses of what people are enjoying about "good" games then he or she likely hasn't played enough bad ones.**

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A COPY OF:

## HOMEFRONT

Remember, it's okay if you don't like it as much as we did!



Liar, liar, pants on fire

## ABOUT FACE

Dear OPS,

Love the mag, no-one does it quite as well as you guys, can't wait for the next issue.

Timothy Durrant's email in your last issue inspired me to write in. His story of what people can gain from growing up playing games really spoke to me, as I have a similar condition (in some aspects) that left me with heavily hindered fine motor skills and almost non-existent social abilities. Throughout my younger years videogames helped me develop skills that I would be without if not for my gaming experiences. Playing games made me somewhat more socially acceptable to classmates and helped me learn to read social and characteristic signs that I was unable to notice before. Still, through all my years of gaming I've learned that there are games that are fun and good for a quick laugh, but then there's that once in a blue moon title that comes round occasionally to show us what videogames are really capable of. I believe that *L.A. Noire* is one of them. The technology that is being used to capture all of the facial expression in an actor's performance is something that is highly likely to change the industry forever. Just the thought of being able to judge a character's performance and making decisions based on intuition and suspicion reminds me that the videogame industry is constantly changing and becoming more diverse. I just hope the rest of the world can keep up.

**Tate Pryor**, via email

**L.A. Noire is going to be a game-changer...**

## UPSIZING EVERYTHING

That's bullshit, Luke, about how it doesn't matter if games are long or not. For example, I'm not going to pay \$110 for a cheeseburger – even if it's the best cheeseburger in the world – if it's going to be eaten in two bites. Don't get me wrong, I'm not going to pay that much for a game if it's 1000 hours long but it's crap. Paul, spot on mate, I would gladly go back to PS2 graphics if it means I could play a game like *Uncharted* for 20 hours instead of 11. And one other thing Luke, it's not 20 years ago so why bring that up? No one is writing games off solely on length but it would have to be a pretty remarkable game to be worth \$100 if it only lasts five hours. The only reason *CoD* is alive is its online play. If it just had its story, as good as it is, it'd take me the same amount of time to cook a sausage roll as it would to finish *Modern Warfare 2* and *Black Ops*.

**Paul McBride**, via Facebook

**We don't think you're quite following; nobody's talking about \$110 cheeseburgers. We're talking about relative value. Would you rather spend \$2 on a tasty cheeseburger or \$2 on a bucket of discarded buns? Just because something's bigger doesn't make it better. You say you'd rather play a 20-hour *Uncharted* than an 11-hour one but you're falling into the trap Luke spoke off; assuming quality is static. What if a 20-hour *Uncharted* was badly paced, full of tedious padding and boring?**

**Games aren't a consumable item you**

## Speak to us!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

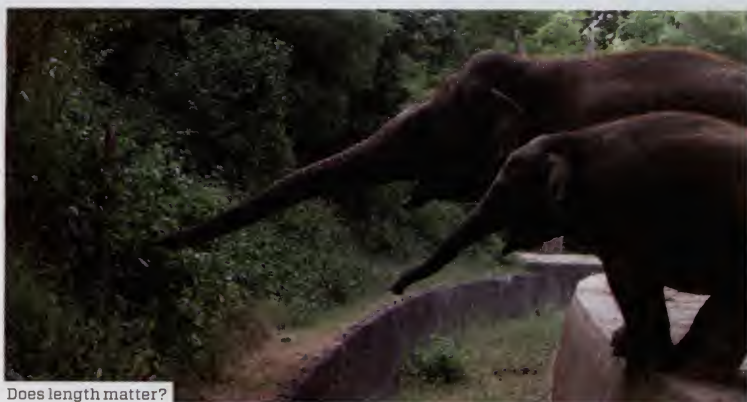
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Does length matter?

## “What’s your favourite book, or your favourite film? Would they be better if they were longer? Why?”

can scale up anymore than a movie, or a book, or an album. Games are art as a carefully crafted experience. What’s your favourite book, or your favourite film? Would they be better if they were longer? Why? They’re already your favourites for a reason.

Has anyone ever chosen to purchase a movie based on length? Who’s going to buy *Battlefield Earth* over *District 9* because the latter is shorter than the former? Is one book better than another because it has more pages?

The argument that games back in the early ‘90s used to be shorter is a valid one. It looks to us that a lot of the debate about game length is an entitlement issue: “Games cost \$100 so they should be longer.” Thing is, games have always been similarly expensive. Videogames weren’t 90 per cent cheaper back when they used to last one hour instead of 10, so we’re not sure where this stems from.

You’re right when you say games like *Black Ops* would be little without multiplayer, but that’s kind of the whole point. Back before multiplayer was rife, first-person shooters could and did last longer. This, however, was back when multiplayer was little more than some token four-player splitscreen, checkpoints were lightyears apart and health didn’t regenerate. It’s easy to make your game last ages when you haven’t been distracted building a separate multiplayer mode and players die a lot and are required to play large portions levels again and again.

*Homefront*’s a good example. The single-player is shorter than a tick’s pube. But nobody is asking you to pay 100 bills for just four or five hours of single-player – the multiplayer is a part of the transaction, whether you like it not. Sink 10, 20 or 100 hours into the multiplayer and suddenly the cost of entry doesn’t look so bad after all.

### KILLING THE COMPETITION

On behalf of the entire *Assassin’s Creed* team to all the readers of *Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia* we want to give thanks for the great honour of having both *Assassin’s Creed* and *Assassin’s Creed II* as part of the Top 100. *Assassin’s Creed* opened a door to a universe that is large, rich, diverse and engaging with its unique setting and gameplay possibilities. Taking upon that premise, *Assassin’s Creed II*

transported players on an epic storyline, an engaging adventure allowing players to be immersed in the Renaissance, a challenging historic period, while discovering Italy’s architectural beauties. With our latest addition to the franchise, *Assassin’s Creed Brotherhood*, we continue to strive for excellence in both our single player offering and our unique multiplayer experience. All our games have been crafted with care and love and receiving this honour is of great value to all of us. Big thanks to everyone. **Sebastien Puel**, producer of *Assassin’s Creed II*, Ubisoft Montreal

Cheers for the message Sebastien!

### CUT IT OUT

Dear OPS,

I won’t lie, all the recent anti-cutscene talk is freaking me out. Personally I love cut scenes and I’d be most upset if developers

cut them out because online stats say that many players skip through them. I find them enthralling and usually plot related with subtle quest related hints. I think a good compromise is developers just letting people hit start or  $\otimes$  to skip a cutscene so people without patience can stop whinging about wanting to play the game and not watch it so to speak.

I’m an RPG fanboy of the hack and slash genre and the cutscenes are usually pretty epic and with the tech these days are total eye candy.

Speaking of eye candy the pics in the latest mag of Lara Croft splattered with blood nursing a bow and arrow? Nice! I haven’t bought a *Tomb Raider* game since the PS2. I’m liking the new look and talk of the new combat system so I’ll be picking me up a copy.

The developers should be sending you guys muffin baskets! The amount of games I’ve bought after reading your articles about them are too numerous to list! I’m also quite enjoying the movie and anime reviews!

Great work people. If ever a game like *Drakan: The Ancients’ Gates* comes out please write it up asap! *Lair* was, well... disappointing.

**David Forrester**, via email

**Don’t fret about cutscenes; they’re not going anywhere. Paul may love to skip through them but the rest of us cringe every time he does so because we hate missing out on stuff.**

We’re glad you value our advice and we hope you’ve enjoyed all the titles we’ve recommended. We’ve never received a muffin basket but the knowledge we’re helping good games reach the hands of hungry gamers is all we’re after.

You like dragons? Check out the *Dragon Age* series. We have it on good authority it contains dragons.

### Cuttings

#### ► Give him the jackboot

Videogames. Because I never got the chance to show Hitler ‘What For’.

**Che Patterson**, via Facebook

**The sooner someone rips off the end of *Inglourious Basterds* for a videogame the better. How about it, Stuart Black? We hear you’re working on a balls-out, no-sappy-stuff WWII shooter...**

#### ► Get Carter

Angry Sackboy’s quirky bit of creative writing a few issues back featuring Carter Pinsky (videogame industry bigwig and all-around douchebag) was the funniest thing I’ve ever read in a videogame mag. More please – and bring back the Forgotten Male Leads Society!

**Derek Norris**, via email

**Stay tuned for more from the more kooky stuff from Angry Sackboy; he’s always good for a clever yarn or two.**

#### ► Ready for PEGI

I believe that the best solution to the [classification] problem would be to introduce the PEGI system that is already used in Europe and uses age ratings that are easy for parents to understand.

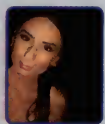
**Josh Rochford**, via email

**We agree some form of self-regulation is the way to go. Check out page 58 for more.**

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### ▼ Storefront

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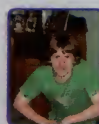
Tara Khamo  
**Red Dead Redemption**

“On sale! Where else can you tie someone up and drag them half way across the country?”



David Boland  
**Mass Effect 2**

“I just had to see what all the fuss was about”



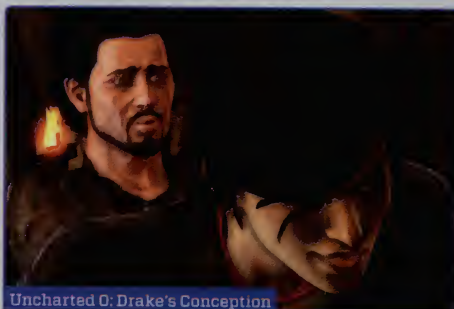
Griff Butters  
**Dead Space 2**

“Because it was supposed to be scary and gory”



Brad Steen  
**LittleBigPlanet 2**

“I love playing with my sack!”



**Uncharted 2: Drake's Deception**

### Caption This ►

You put the words to the screen. Simple.

**Brendan Ward** went for the obvious and has scored himself a prize stolen from Paul’s desk.



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# in coming

## This Month

- 34 Bulletstorm
- 36 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 38 Fight Night Champion
- 39 Call of Juarez: The Cartel
- 39 Dark Souls
- 40 DiRT 3
- 41 The Darkness II
- 41 Batman: Arkham City
- 42 Top Spin 4
- 43 Silent Hill: Downpour
- 43 Anarchy Reigns



Guts and gore-y, kid

**'K**ill with skill' is this game's tagline. You could also say it's trying to 'shoot to thrill', with a monsoon of brass and lead spewing across the screen and into enemies that have generously thick skin. Realism has no place here and it's a massive antithesis to the shooters we've played over the last 12 months.

The world of *Bulletstorm* is a shooting gallery with an alarming amount of environmental hazards. Enemies are either waiting in rooms or come streaming into areas that conveniently line up with your sights, or close to walls with spikes or exposed electrical wires. That tagline 'kill with skill' encourages you to think creatively as well as precisely.

*Bulletstorm* heralds the return of points, and positions itself as the most 'arcade' shooter possible: If you were describing this game to your mum she'd call it sadistic, but the way it's presented is ridiculously over the top. Putting a bullet into a guy's head is a pretty easy thing to do, though you'll need to fire at least four or five to get the job done properly. Well done, 10 points. Instead, you could wait 'til he's close enough and kick him in the chest. This is your melee move, and refreshingly it's not an overpowered one-hit kill.

Your boot launches enemies a good metre or so into the air, but temporarily puts them into

slow-mo so you can aim at their crucial body parts and pick them apart. Or you could kick them, shoot them a bit, then kick them again to keep them airborne and then impale them onto a spiky wall. That's triple-figured points right there. You can wait for someone to run towards you and dispense the first part of size-11 justice, or you can do a magnificent slide, sole first, that would earn a red card and lifetime ban.

You're also equipped with a leash, a kind-of grapple gun that yanks baddies towards you whether they're in your line of sight or hidden behind a wall. As long as they're in range the leash will tug them towards you and when they're close enough they'll be affected by the same slow motion your boot achieves.

It's one of the most original mechanics we've seen in a game, and seeing a freak slowly rotating in the air, ungracefully floating to the ground is a comical sight. Wait until he's facing away from you and you can aim a bullet where the sun should never shine for a killshot. Ouch.

There are over 100 of these killshots in game, and some of them come from chaining together attacks, or relying on a set piece in level. From what we've seen, enemy patterns are pretty regular, so repeated run throughs of levels are encouraged if you're trying to get the highest score possible. At the end of a stage you're ranked against your mates; EA's mantra is



*Bulletstorm* is a mash of all the great ideas, themes, and outrageous characters from the last two decades of shooters

# orm

all about comparing scores with your peers – a lesson learned from *Need For Speed's* Autolog.

*Bulletstorm* is a mash of all the great ideas, themes, and outrageous characters from the last two decades of shooters. It doesn't take much to notice where the team have taken their inspiration. There's the points-for-kills element from *The Club*. *Doom's* rapid-firing chain gun and the credo of movement is king. *Serious Sam* for a brightly-coloured funland of mayhem. *Borderlands'* ugly, suicidal stream of chumps to eviscerate. The *Quake* series for the plot. *Vanquish's* bold sense of style. Hell, it's even beating Codemasters' *Bodycount* in the all-out action stakes before the game's even out.

Guns have two firing modes, and the leash itself has an explosive attack too. Some weapons have a charged shot, one directs a firework-like ballistic that sends them rocketing up and away. Another, the Flail Gun normally shoots a bolas with explosives at either end, becomes a shearing wire of death that cuts through bone as it would butter.

The action betrays the story though, which seems to take itself seriously. Grayson Hunt, an absurdly gruff space marine – that's you – is only marginally less macho and dumb-fun than Duke Nukem. He's stranded on a planet called Stygia with an ex colleague Ishi Sato, and a semi love interest Trishka Novak. We'll forgive you if you

fell asleep during that last sentence. It could've been done with being a bit sillier and less basic.

We're expecting big things from the weaponry, as it's the action that needs to tie *Bulletstorm* together. On paper it sounds exciting, and when you're absorbed in a frantic section of run-and-gun mayhem it's really entertaining. We hope more devs bring back the boot as a melee attack as it's just so gratifying. Some parts suffer from repetition though, and you can't take your time with picking people apart as much as you might like. Though you have two AI partners they are there to make your journey less lonely. Sure, they fire their weapons but this is all about you.

You need to work pretty hard with nailing creative kills as well. We just couldn't aim an enemy with the leash to direct them into an environmental prop, and sometime were hiding behind pillars and tugging enemies in, relying on the points bursting on screen to confirm a killshot. Or, we'd have to leash them towards us, strafe to the side and then plant the boot. It didn't feel as fluid as we'd like it to in these instances, so it's something to look for in the final build.

We're optimistic though. 2011 is the year of the shooter, and while *Bulletstorm* may be the entrée to more fulfilling shooter fare. Full review next issue. **Paul Taylor**

"You shot me, you a-hole! That'll grow back, right?" "..."

More games need to reward the nut-shot. **Just sayin'**

## War never changes

Early last month Epic Games released a couple of very cheeky trailers lampooning the games they know *Bulletstorm* is not. One of them mimics Another Console's flagship series and characters (hint: he wears a green helmet and his name rhymes with *Faster Thief*), while the other, titled 'Duty Calls' blatantly calls the *Call of Duty* franchise out into the playground for a dust up. Go to [thedutycalls.com](http://thedutycalls.com) for a look.

## The Pitch

Bits and pieces of shooters from the last 20 years of videogames in a hyper-visual and ultra-violent world, loaded with tongue-in-cheek humour

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** SHOOTER

**EXPECTED RELEASE:** NOW

**DISTRIBUTOR:** EA

**DEVELOPER:** EPIC GAMES

**PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

**RRP:** TBC

## They Say

"Players will utilise the Skillshot system in *Bulletstorm* as they crush enemies in increasingly creative ways to rack up points using an arsenal of powerful weapons"

## We Say

It's definitely creative but beware of suffering shooter fatigue with relentless action. Look here if you want anything but another *Call of Duty*.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE

NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

**LOOKING GOOD**

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING



"I don't care if you have protection and you're horny, human. Leave!"

# The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

'Scuse me, while I rim the sky

## The Pitch

A Tolkien-style wet dream made digital

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** RPG

**EXPECTED RELEASE:**

NOVEMBER 11, 2011

**DISTRIBUTOR:** BETHESDA

**DEVELOPER:** BETHESDA

**PLAYERS:** 1

The greatest power you were ever given in *Oblivion* wasn't the invisibility spell, nor the glitch that let you duplicate enough items to make a mountain to the moon with melons. Those awesome skills paled in comparison to the simple ability to go anywhere, do anything and be whomever or whatever you wished. *Skyrim* carries that same torch forward, but the flame burns much brighter thanks to eyeball-searing visuals and bursts of bitchin' dragon fire.

Being one of the legendary Dragonborn, you can now call in a winged air strike that is the fantasy world equivalent of a nuclear bomb. However, you'll probably not appreciate this death-from-above as much when you realise that there are hostile races of dragons out there too. If you're visiting one of the five major metropolises dotted about the 41 square kilometre area of *Skyrim* it's possible to see a randomised assault by Snuff the tragic dragon. If you really piss these wild dragons off they'll march

through city streets, breathing fire, engulfing buildings and causing significant damage to city structures.

If you've ever wondered what it's like to be a burnt chip that's being chased by a seagull: wonder no longer, stout adventurer.

Fortunately, the slaying of a dragon will be a 'serious risk, serious reward' mechanic. Other perks of the Dragonborn birth right include the use of dragon shouts; powerful skills that are gained every time you stab down a scaly-one. Details of dragon shouts are still sketchy, but some examples include teleportation, slowing down time, and the ability to 'force push' enemies backward like ragdolls. There will be over 20 different dragon shouts to be gained throughout your quest, and they become increasingly effective as you absorb the souls of more and more slain dragons.

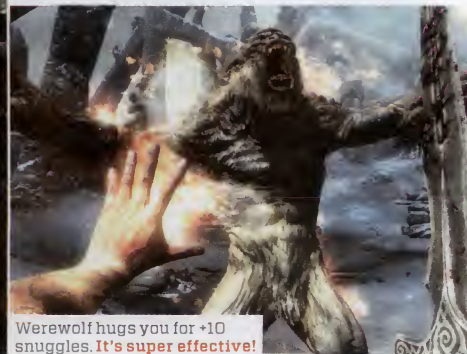
Sure, it'll be an uphill battle to take down the first few of these behemoths but you'll be by no means defenceless. You now have the ability to dual-wield mele

weapons or spells and that act of doubling up on a particular magicka attack will kick it up to 11. You're going to need that extra pep too, Bethesda is planning to have over 130 dungeons scattered across *Skyrim*, and – mercifully – when you enter a dungeon for the first time, the monsters within will lock to your experience level permanently, even if you revisit later at a higher level.

On the topic of sanity-preserving game design: fast-travelling will be making a return as well. This will go a long way to making this epic quest as fast-flowing as possible. Even with that feature Bethesda is pegging the main quest of the game as roughly 20 hours to complete, not including the side-quests and the many guild diversions sprinkled across *Skyrim*. If fast-travelling isn't your bag and you'd prefer to skip along and smell the daisies, you should be aware that behind every second tree is something trying to kill you. So far the confirmed wildlife includes zombies, skeletons, trolls, giants, ice wraiths, giant spiders, wolves, horses, elk, mammoths and saber-toothed cats. Oh my.

Surprisingly, Bethesda has opted to remove the old class system from *Oblivion*, instead relying upon faster levelling, 18 major skills and some 280 *Fallout*-like perks. These perks are skill-specific abilities, organised into a system of branching groups called 'skill trees' and will be selected over

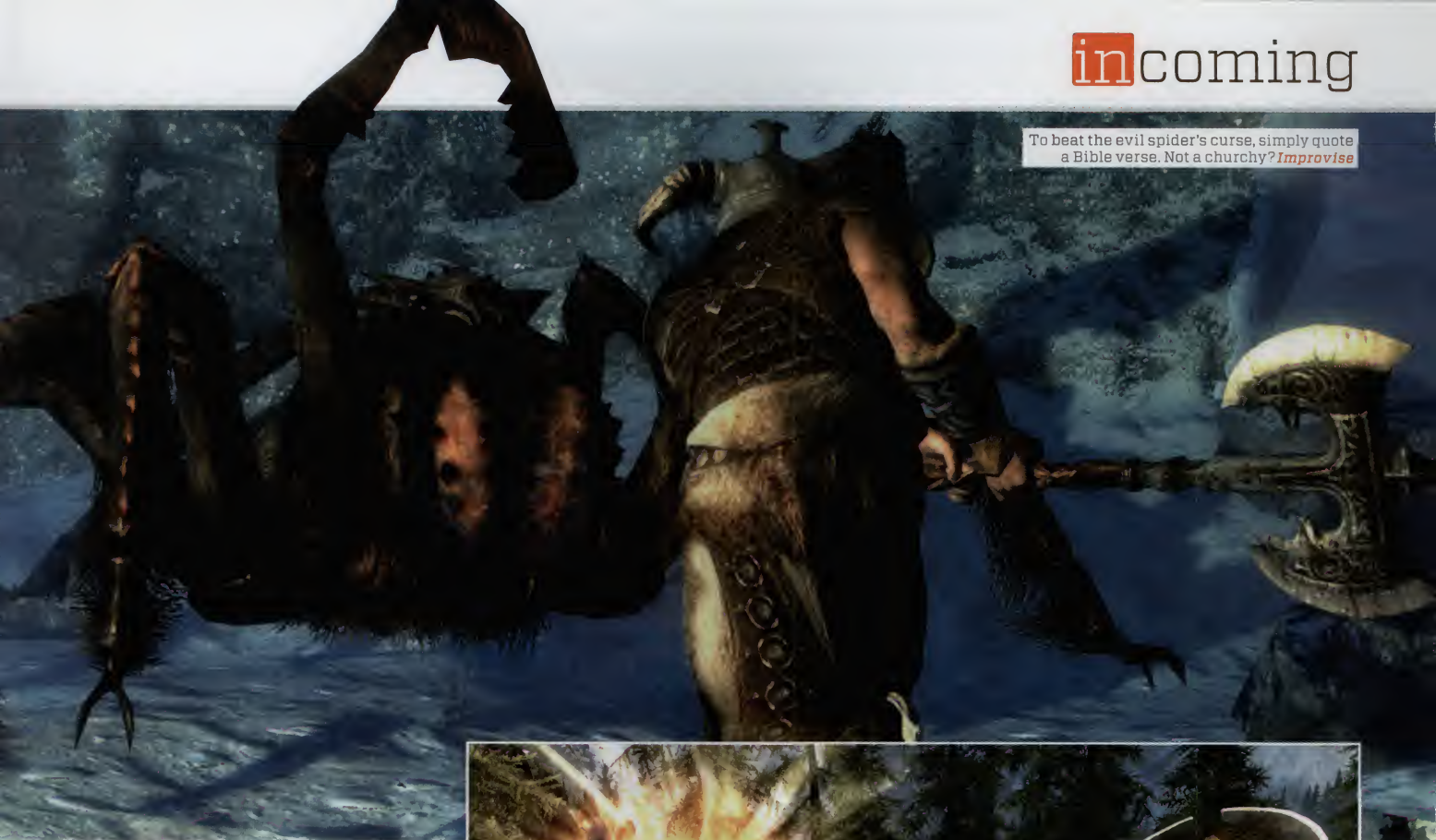
"Charge, my zombie brothers! Do you wanna un-live forever?!"



Werewolf hugs you for +10 snuggles. It's super effective!



To beat the evil spider's curse, simply quote a Bible verse. Not a churchy? **Improvise**



the course of 50 levels. That said, your level can be raised past 50, indefinitely. The magic schools have been re-jigged as well. There are now five, including Destruction, Alteration, Conjuration, Restoration and Illusion.

Fortunately the process of your virtual self-improvement and gear management has evolved as well. Bethesda has added a menu that will allow players to swap between different weapon and armour loadouts quickly and the pause-screen inventory menu is presented in a simplified compass-style overlay. Every in-game object and trinkets can now be viewed, rotated and zoomed in on in full 3D within this menu. The HUD isn't as flashy but it only appears when your health, stamina, or magicka is being depleted – thus preserving the cinematic feel of the experience.

## Skyrim, a tourist's guide

Skyrim contains five of the highest snowy peaks in Tamriel and they're home to all manner of lycanthropes. Only in the western reaches is there some measure of flat land, where most of the civilised population resides. The rest of Skyrim is about mountains, cliffs, and deep valleys. Of note; Skyrim is the only region in Tamriel suitable for the brewing of the infamous alcoholic beverage Nordic Whiskey, also known as "Rotgut". Have a mug, you mug. It'll put hairs on the hairs of your chest.



You're the reason **fireworks night got banned**. Nice work, jerk

Clutter is the very last thing you'll want overlaid over this visual masterpiece. *Skyrim* is running on the new Creation Engine, a proprietary powerhouse that boasts epic draw distances and a truly amazing dynamic lighting system. There's a new flora system in place that allows for much greater detail and the technology even lets designers assign tree branches with different weights, which will determine how wind affects the tree.

Similarly there's been an overhaul in the AI department, allowing NPCs to interact with their world in a much more believable fashion, such as working at farms, mills, woodcutting camps or in mines. You may just have to watch your back as well: in some cases these AI buggers will fight amongst each other (and against you) for their share of the loot. It's little attentions to detail like this that have the potential to make *Skyrim* a truly enchanting experience that will never play out the same way twice.

*Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* came about fairly early in the PS3's lifecycle and there's a chance that many of you haven't yet been wooed by it's wow-factor.

Fortunately Bethesda has set other precedents of its game-crafting greatness with the GOTY that was *Fallout 3*. *Skyrim*'s pedigree is undeniable. As soon as it pokes its head out we're gonna swoop, scoop and make an absolute meal out of it. **Adam Mathew**

## They Say

"Come and try your luck at a wander through the most foreboding and callous land this side of Bruma. Barbarians, werewolves and wer-barbarians await you!"

## We Say

Bring it on. We worry not about your frigid wastelands because you've (finally) allowed us to create an adventurer with a beard.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
LOOKING GOOD

**GREAT STUFF**  
SURE-THING





“You’d have to hand **Willy Wonka a Large Hadron Collider** to produce sweeter science”

# Fight Night Champion

‘Arder than a coffin nail

Music cue: Oasis, ‘F---ing in the Bushes’

The folks at EA Canada have been anything but slack, their off-season appears to be wholly comprised of an epic training montage. They’ve punched cow carcasses. They’ve made themselves into a human huskies in order to pull old Russian geezers through the snow. They’ve set about reinventing the sporting genre that they’ve helped to define.

Their newest approach to boxing games is largely uorthodox, south-paw, and it’s causing eyebrows to rise and guards to drop. Regular fans of the *FN* series – and even detractors of sports games in general – will not see this “boxing game with a plot” coming. *Fight Night Champion* could prove to be a dreamland express from out of nowhere.

If *Fight Night Round 4* shocked you by being faster and better looking than the already impressive *Fight Night 3*, prepare to have your head rocked harder still. *Champion* also makes all previous outings look like kid glove versions of the sport. The epic king-hits you’ll unload here can make your opponent’s face pulpier than a bad glass of tomato juice.

EA Canada has also re-jigged its ‘full spectrum punch control’ by doing away with the arcade-stick contortions needed for power punches. Opting instead to streamline the approach to analogue assault and battery, they’ve added a power modifier on **RT** that lets you channel some extra mongrel into any style of punch. There’s now even the option to use a block modifier to throw a punch whilst guarding.

## The Pitch

Hard-hitting drama that will draw you in and deviate your septum.

## Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SPORTS

EXPECTED RELEASE:

MARCH 3 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

PLAYERS: 1-2

## You’re fightin’ like a bum, Rock

New to the *Fight Night* franchise will be the addition of a Legacy Mode which is basically a ranking system that’ll start you off as an amateur fighter and have you climb all the way up to becoming the *Fight Night Champion* champion. Players will progress by earning XP, buying training venues and pump up that musculature and, obviously, fighting.

Do those things make the boxing better? Let’s just say you’d have to hand Willy Wonker a Large Hadron Collider to produce sweeter science.

But that’s all textbook stuff for improving a boxing sequel. The big switch-up that has sent us punch-drunk is how fantastic the new narrative aspect of *Champion* looks. Boxing is a rough sport and the trials and tribulations faced by the contenders have served as the inspiration for many kick-arse films, like *Cinderella Man*, *The Fighter* and about a zillion *Rocky* flicks. EA Canada is skilfully tapping into this high drama potential by dropping us into what seems to be a modern recreation of history’s greatest title bout: Cain v. Abel.

You’re cast as Andre Bishop, an outstanding boxing talent. He and his younger brother Raymond are trained by Gus Carisi, a chap who also used to train their failed-boxer father. Andre has tremendous potential and DL McQueen, a shady promoter, is bent on controlling his career. Andre and Gus aren’t interested in working with McQueen and the story centres around the struggles you’ll face trying to reach your potential with a variety of obstacles thrown in your way.

Will this be a fully realised RPG? Should the marketing department rename it to *Bash Effect*? Not quite. *Champion* mode will be a linear story with no branching paths. The team say that we shouldn’t expect to be faced with moral choices or to have the plot change dynamically based on our performance in the ring. Even still, the story mode’s “in the ring challenges” will play out differently for each player depending on their skill level and preferred playing style.

It’s inspiring to see EA sticking its neck out to try new things with an established brand. From what we’ve played and seen so far, *Fight Night Champion* is taking a large, but calculated, risk in order to knock our blocks off in the long-run.

Adam Mathew

## They Say

“A drastic turn from previous instalments, depicting a “grittier” and “darker” setting”

## We Say

Grittier than taking some punk’s face and rubbing it in gravel. We likey.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
LOOKING GOOD  
GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING



This game needs a **Create-A-Pikey** mode





# Call of Juarez: The Cartel

Every day above ground is a good day

## The Pitch

Like the old west, but new-like. Yeehaw!

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** FPS

**EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA

**DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT

**DEVELOPER:** TECHLAND

**PLAYERS:** 1-TBA

If there are two types of games we can't get enough of it's modern first-person shooters and Westerns. With *Call of Juarez: The Cartel* Ubisoft has had the good sense to roll those two ingredients together and they've topped that culinary creation off with a sprinkling of drugs.

Not a game for kids, then.

Billed as an 'immersive and mature' story, Ubisoft tells us we'll be venturing to Los Angeles, California and Juarez (duh) in a plot that's heavily entangled with the present-day Mexican Drug War. If you're not a current affairs kind of gamer, Juarez sits on the border of the US and Mexico and is one of the world's deadliest cities right now, thanks to a three-year war between drug cartels and the Mexican government. It has

claimed upwards of 5000 lives so far.

Why all the ruckus? Along with El Paso, Texas, Juarez is a primary crossing point for drugs smuggled into the United States. Whoever seizes control of that city gets the drug trade, the money, the power and also 'de wimen' [citation needed].

Bad *Scarface* references aside, *The Cartel's* gritty setting and recreation of current events is a bold move by Ubisoft and returning *Call of Juarez* developer Techland. If they can manage to get their facts straight and avoid glamourising, or trivialising, the conflict, this could be a very interesting experience.

At this point it's unclear as to whether or not this modern *Call of Juarez* will continue the bloodline of the McCalls, as was always the case in the earlier games in the series. Either way, we're itchin' to meet the locals and get a little narc-y. Or a lot. **Adam Mathew**

## They Say

"Experience the lawlessness of the West and take justice into your own hands"

## We Say

If 'Justice' is the name of some sort of hand cannon, then yes, we most certainly will.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE

NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING

# Dark Souls

Death is just the beginning... of another death

## The Pitch

Same team, same punishment. Just better

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE

**EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2011

**DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI

**PARTNERS**

**DEVELOPER:** FROMSOFTWARE

**PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

Thanks to *Demon's Souls* there are dividing structures in our office that no longer exist. FromSoftware's frustration intensive RPG was so ludicrously difficult we found ourselves commemorating each death (and restart) by punching out at walls. Hence our new open-plan office where one can easily sit on the toilet, make some toast and hold a face-to-face conversation with any guests walking through the front door.

The good (read: bad) news is that the follow-up, *Dark Souls*, is set to make its ball-busting predecessor look like a cakewalk. If ever there

was a time to invest money in nerf televisions and rage therapy centres, it is now.

Set in a rich, dark fantasy universe, *Dark Souls* is set to offer tense dungeon crawling, fearsome enemy encounters and groundbreaking online features. According to creator Hidetaka Miyazaki "players will need to pay a little more attention [this time around] and be a little bit more careful than before. That's how this game will be more difficult." The basic gist is: you'll need to be paranoid about the game analysing you. If you try to continue hacking away with the same safe strategies for every situation, *Dark Souls* will spot your lack of imagination and smack you upside the head accordingly. Play confident, stupid.

Dual-wielding has been revamped, but according to Miyazaki it comes with some serious downsides, given the amount of stamina swinging two swords requires. Not to mention the fact that the difficulty of the game has been tuned to naturally favour the player who is packing one shield and a sword. Anybody you see online packing double swords is either very good, or about to die.

Much like our morbid fascination with real-life death, the lure of repeated virtual pantsings handed out by *Dark Souls* is proving to be an irresistible lure.

We do so love a hearty challenge with little chance of success. Ask our landlord, he'll set you straight. **Adam Mathew**



A rare shot where the player is still alive

## They Say

*Demon's Souls* was a 30-40 hour ride. This is 60 hours to complete and, instead of the 30 enemy types in the predecessor, this will have close to 100.

## We Say

The fact that Miyazaki has said that "the interface and control methods are being made to match up with world standards, so long as they don't go against the gameplay ideas" makes us want this that much more

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE

NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING



# DiRT 3

There's a new hoon rising

## The Pitch

The game *DiRT 2* ought to have been

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** RACING

**EXPECTED RELEASE:**

MAY 24 2011

**DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

**DEVELOPER:**

CODEMASTERS

**PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

The more we learn about *DiRT 3* the more we're dying to play the final version.

*DiRT 3* will boast more cars, more locations, more routes and more events than any other game in the series, with double the track content of 2009's *DiRT 2*.

The rally stages will stretch across Europe, Africa and the US and, following much criticism regarding the lack of traditional rally stages in *DiRT 2*, account for 60 per cent of the career mode in *DiRT 3*.

With rally stages set across three continents players will be thrown a variety of conditions to master across tarmac, gravel and snow in dry and wet conditions. Codies promise a tough and dynamic rally experience.

Codemasters has revealed an updated look at *DiRT 3* with new footage that reveals new rally locations in Kenya and Finland and another trio of iconic rally cars: the Audi Sport Quattro Rallye, Lancia Fulvia HF and Kris Meeke's 2009 Intercontinental Rally Championship winning Peugeot 207 S2000.

In it Gehan Pathiraja, senior vehicle handling designer, and Tim Dearing, vehicle-handling designer, explain *DiRT 3*'s improved handling model in detail.

"We're working much closer with manufacturers and racing drivers to make sure the physics are as realistic as possible for each and every car in the game," says Pathiraja.

"In a slide you'll notice that in a rear wheel drive car the rear end will be coming around on your a lot faster so you'll be required to counter steer. In a front wheel drive car you'll be looking to enter a corner much slower to counter off the understeer and in four-wheel drive you've got



Uno dos tres... quattro

much more traction to be able to handle any situation."

Impressive stuff, but it doesn't end there.

"Without a doubt the car handling in *DiRT 3* is the best it's ever been in a *Colin McRae* game," says Pathiraja. "What we looked to do is improve the way the weight shifts in the car, it's far more realistic. It transfers that force in much more detailed fashion on the springs, dampers and the tyres."

Dearing goes on to explain how there are, in fact, around 400 parameters available for them to modify to get the handling for each car just right.

American WRC driver Ken Block and Northern Irishman Kris Meeke (2009 Intercontinental Rally Champion) are on hand to wax approvingly about the physics.

"The realism of *DiRT 3* is just amazing," says Block. "The graphics have come up another level from *DiRT 2*, the way the car handles, the way it looks, it's just incredible."

"Mind blowing is the first thing that comes to mind, how realistic it is. Every element to it," says Meeke. "When I sit down and play *DiRT 3* I get a sweat on and I want more and more and more. There must be something pretty good about it because my day job is driving rally cars."

*DiRT 3* might still be a bit of a hooligan at heart but, even months out from release, it's making *DiRT 2* look like a speedhump.

*DiRT 3* is out May 24. **Clint McCredie**

## They Say

"[It] delivers mud, sweat and gears the world over: from the intense weather-beaten rally stages of Europe, Africa and the US, to executing performance driving showcases and career challenges where car control is pushed to spectacular limits"

## We Say

Bring it on Codemasters. We're ready to believe again!

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
**LOOKING GOOD**  
GREAT STUFF  
SURE-THING



Union Jack on a French car? Odd



Not the sort of Harley you'd try throwing your leg over

# Batman Arkham City

This town needs an enema

## The Pitch

An open-world Bat-venture with more gadgetry, gliding and Catwoman

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** ACTION

**EXPECTED RELEASE:** LATE 2011

**DISTRIBUTOR:** WARNER BROS.

**DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTEADY

**STUDIOS**

**PLAYERS:** 1

In the criminal justice system, the people of Gotham city are represented by two separate yet equally important groups: the police (who somehow draw a paycheck for lazily tossing all criminals into a walled-in suburb called Arkham City) and the goddamn Batman. These are their stories.

Since the last time we spoke of *Arkham City*, there have been a few interesting reveals. First of all, the rumour of a possible multiplayer mode has been dispelled by game director Sefton Hill. Secondly, the following characters have been confirmed to appear: Two-Face, Catwoman, The Joker, Mr. Freeze, The Riddler, Victor Zsasz, Talla al Ghul and... Calendar Man. This is shaping up to be one heck of a super villain showdown. So much so that famed Batman voice actor Kevin Conroy has stated that *Arkham City* is "very, very dark" and has even compared it with the twisted

narrative of *Batman Beyond: Return of the Joker*.

All of the bat-gadgets previously obtained in *Arkham Asylum* will be present at the start of this bat-venture, with some possessing tricky new capabilities. This sequel incorporates more puzzle elements too; the use of Batman's 'Detective Mode' will be used to greater effect when performing forensic analysis at crime scenes, such as tracing the origin of fired bullets. Bats also has access to a criminal database that tracks the major villains across the city and will be used in the puzzles.

Wonderful toys aside, we're most excited about the fact that Rocksteady has enhanced the original combat system and doubled the number of animations to reflect the larger arsenal of arse-kicking moves at Batman's disposal. Bring this virtual vigilante violence on. **Adam Mathew**

## They Say

"We opted to use all our effort to strengthen the single player game, rather than slap on some multiplayer"

## We Say

A wise decision and one that more developers/publishers ought to pay attention to

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
LOOKING GOOD

**GREAT STUFF**

SURE-THING

# The Darkness II

Sweet, sweet tentacle action



"Hey, overalls. You're all overs"

## The Pitch

A heavenly shooter experience... from hell

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** SHOOTER

**EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA

**DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K GAMES

**DEVELOPER:** DIGITAL

**EXTREMES**

**PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

Starbreeze Studios did one hell of a job with the comic adaptation that was 2007's *The Darkness*. It was a stylish shooter that looked shiny, played great and, thanks to Mike Patton's vocal chords, sounded like the VO was freelanced out to Lucifer himself. Go out and pick up a cheap copy of it today, for your kids!

Unfortunately, none of the aforementioned praise means squat when applied to *The Darkness II*. Starbreeze and its proprietary engine have been torn out of the franchise like the heart and soul of so many hapless mobsters,

and in their place 2K are hoping to transplant in new developer Digital Extremes and its own Evolution Engine.

The latter handled *Dark Sector* and, had that game not been refused classification by our censors, you'd know that it stood up quite well visually to its contemporaries running on the Unreal engine. Only time will tell if this Evolution engine has been keeping silent pace over the years and living up to its moniker.

*The Darkness II* is set two years after Jackie Estacado, now the Don of the Franchetti crime family, used *The Darkness* to trim the population of the mob down considerably. A sudden, unprovoked attack on his life triggers a full-scale mob war, which has clearly been orchestrated by some outside force. Sensing the delicious carnage *The Darkness* re-emerges inside Jackie, and takes him on a journey to hell and worse.

As always, the game will take a unique stance on fighting in the dark versus the light. Combined with the arsenal of weapons at Jackie's disposal and the gruesome attacks of the supernatural Demon Arms and Darkness powers, *The Darkness II* has the potential to offer FPS fans something new and refreshing.

Can Digital Extremes capture the magic and class of the original? Given the screens we've been seeing so far, our hope is springing eternal (demon tentacles that feast on hearts).

**Adam Mathew**

## They Say

"Breaks out of the sea of conventional first-person shooters by allowing Quad-Wielding gameplay (two demon arms + John Woo pistolling)"

## We Say

Bring on your Doctor Octopus mechanics! Please, please, please hire Mike Patton for the voice acting.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
**GOT POTENTIAL**  
LOOKING GOOD  
GREAT STUFF  
SURE-THING



# Top Spin 4

Our request for future DLC: ball-men

## The Pitch

The next, next, next, next, next gen version of *Pong*

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** SPORTS

**EXPECTED RELEASE:**

MARCH 18 2011

**DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K GAMES

**DEVELOPER:** 2K CZECH

**PLAYERS:** 1-4

Any tennis game featuring Aussie former world number one, Pat Rafter, is okay with us. Thanks to *Top Spin 4* Rafter's legend will be resurrected alongside such eminent Grand Slam greats as Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, Jim Courier, Michael Chang and Mark Serrells look-a-like Boris Becker.

We do think it's a bit of a shame that Mark Philippoussis didn't get an reunion invite. Not because we think he deserves a hallowed place amongst the immortals: we just want the option to shout out, "I bags The Poo" during character selection. It's the simple things that amuse us here at OPS.

2K Games is set to smash the sports genre all over again with this sequel and its dedication to authenticity. Almost immediately we could spot the extra work 2K Czech has put into the animation system, which has now been boosted by a whopping 4000 more signature animations.

If you know your real-life players it's positively uncanny to see their unique movements and swings being replicated so accurately on the digital court.

Likewise, sound design has witnessed some impressive tweaks thanks to 'Crowd FX'. As we were in the midst of an epic rally with Nadal for a crucial point the crowd steadily built with intensity. It's a small touch but it's amazing how much immersion and personal gratification it brings to a hard slog challenge. Couple this sensation with an all new TV broadcast style presentation – with pre-match footage, crowd zooms and dynamic camera angles – and you're gawking at a pretty slick tennis title.

Unfortunately the build we went hands-on with didn't have Move support implemented. We can't tell you how well it works, how much tennis elbow it causes, or how many workmates got knocked out whilst testing it. The standard controls worked well enough and still straddle that baseline of being immediately accessible for newcomers yet deep and rewarding for the tennis experts.

*Top Spin 4* employs an XP system to allow you to gradually upgrade your character over time. The best thing about this system is you can't max out all of your avatar's abilities, meaning you'll have to develop a specific style for each one you create.

Skills are upgraded in 'point packs' split into different categories, such as forehand, volley or physical. You can only go up to level 20, so make sure you deploy your point packs effectively to avoid the jack of all trades, master of none problem. Coaches can be unlocked and hired to give you a little boost in certain areas, although each one will also have a detrimental effect on a contrary aspect of your game.

Boasting Grand Slams such as the Aussie Open, Roland Garros and the US Open – not to mention a good selection of Masters 1000 events – *Top Spin 4* has the makings of a tennis game we'd smash six ways from Sunday. In a good way. **Adam Mathew**



Easy, ballboy. Eaaaaaasy

## Keep it professional

If nurturing a create-a-character isn't your thing, *Top Spin 4* boasts a sizeable roster with 25 of the world's top pros. As mentioned earlier they swing like their real-life counterparts and they're also rocking their player specific outfits, individual celebrations and are infused with believable behavioural AI. Available male superstars include Federer, Djoković, Murray, Roddick and Davydenko. The ladies on offer include Wozniacki and Ivanović. Venus and Serena Williams also feature.

## They Say

"*Top Spin 4* brings the competitive action of tennis to life like never before with redesigned controls, jaw-dropping player models and enhanced TV-style presentation elements"

## We Say

Solid as ever, but we really want to feel that crucial Move support in action before we make a line call here. Props for Pat Rafter's inclusion.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
**LOOKING GOOD**  
GREAT STUFF  
SURE-THING



There'll be a downpour in your pants

# Silent Hill: Downpour

Konami wades back into psychological horror

## The Pitch

Flashlights, torrential downpours and nightmares. Sounds like a crappy camping weekend where it's too soggy to BBQ and go for a swim in the creek

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3  
**GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR  
**EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2011  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** MINDSCAPE  
**DEVELOPER:** VATRA GAMES  
**PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

**M**urphy Pendleton isn't a man many would want wandering round their town. The lead character in the eighth *Silent Hill* title is a convict, stranded in the eerie neighbourhood, and finds himself in the woods looking at the wreckage of the prison transport van.

The game has a completely original storyline and publisher Konami promises it'll be 'expansive, yet claustrophobic'. Expect the town itself to be huge, and to find new areas you've never been to before while shrouded in oppressive fog and pouring rain. The subheading teases us: will the weather play a part in the game? We don't expect this to deviate much from the usual formula or themes, though we're glad the story's been reset, somewhat – this isn't a reboot, but the history and family tree in *Silent Hill* is more warped than something you'd find in an Austrian cellar.

We're thinking big puzzles, sprawling environments encompassing tight, daunting sections filled with tension-building flashlights and humanoid monsters. The first game did this in parts, and was also a hit due to the static that crackled from the radio every time a nasty was nearby. The sequel cranked up the psychological torture while improving combat. Parts three and four started to go wayward, though, and the last three titles have been adequate to good, rather than excellent.

We have a few concerns. Are gamers ready for something that's bound to be more paced and less focussed on combat compared to the runaway success offered by *Dead Space*? While the screens look amazing, Vatra Games are a wildcard, and composer Daniel Licht of *Dexter* fame is the composer as series stalwart Akira Yamaoka departed in 2006. We'll be sure to sing its praises when more news breaks. **Paul Taylor**

## They Say

"Screenshots show highly detailed environments of the new Silent Hill, where seedy pasts and uncertain futures unify to create to a terrifying present"

## We Say

'Seedy pasts and uncertain futures'? Sounds like Sydney's Kings Cross after 10pm. Or Adelaide, any time of the day. *Silent Hill*'s always been a reflection of a character's psyche, twisting the real with the imaginary whilst also giving players the chance for sharing monsters. You can be sure of this.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
**LOOKING GOOD**  
GREAT STUFF  
SURE-THING

# Anarchy Reigns

When it pours it reigns

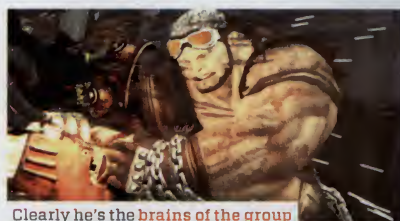
## The Pitch

The typically slick production from Sega's new wunderkind in an online-only title

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3  
**GENRE:** ACTION  
**EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2011  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA  
**DEVELOPER:** PLATINUM GAMES  
**PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

**C**oncrete details on Platinum Games' fifth title are, at best, sketchy. Billed as an online multiplayer brawler the team is relying on at least one character from their small but well-formed roster to set the tone: Jack, from the Wii-curio *Madworld*. The burly, chainsaw



Clearly he's the brains of the group

wielding anti-hero is decked out in spiky leathers. You wouldn't take him to a picnic.

So, high action and ultra-violence then. We're told that players will be placed in the middle of a battle at the same time so we're thinking co-operative destruction and mayhem with a bunch of mates decked out as different character types. There's the worrying psycho, a lanky blonde lady with skin-tight threads who shoot blue bolts of pain from her palms, and a, uh, green ninja with a massive katana.

Along with co-operative play there's also a few standard player-versus-player and team-versus-team modes like Tag Team and Battle Royal. There's nothing to suggest that there'll be any offline modes, and that's a gamble.

It's another crowded year for action games, and we suspect that the bulk of shooters will occupy gamers' consoles and time. Platinum Games has had a string of hits since they hit the scene with the impossibly pretty and sassy *Bayonetta*, and while *Vanquish* wasn't as big a success the team has more than proven their chops. This is a studio that excels in making gorgeous looking games that don't take themselves too seriously.

Their last few games were purely offline and were must-plays, if not must-haves. If the studio can put as much creativity and polish into an online-only title, we're watching with cautious optimism to see if *Anarchy Reigns* enjoys the same success. **Paul Taylor**

## They Say

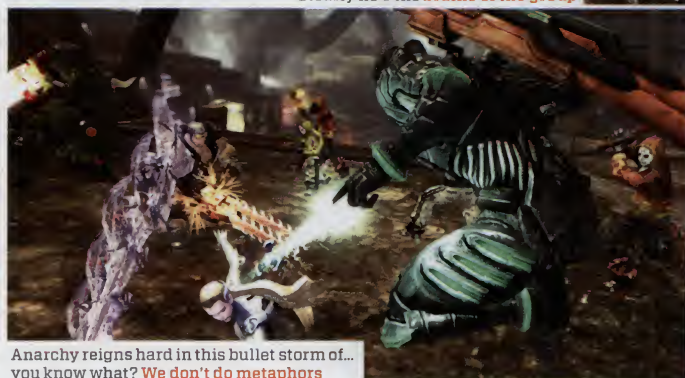
"*Anarchy Reigns* is set to offer gamers a fresh multiplayer experience with the quality and innovation PlatinumGames are renowned for."

## We Say

Honestly, we are a little sceptical of an online-only action game on this side of the world. US and Japanese audiences have the infrastructure and the numbers to make it work but we're still not fully connected. Plus, how much room is there in the action genre?

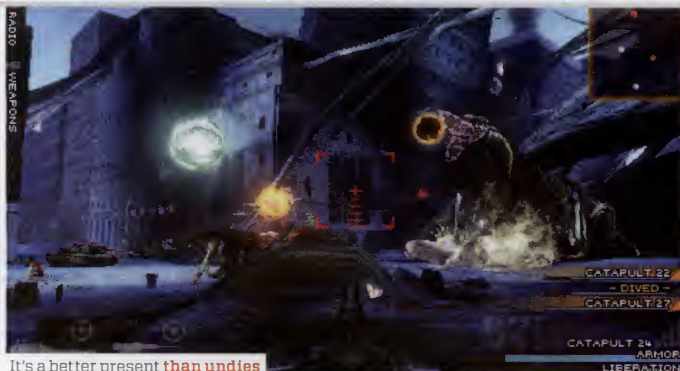
## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
**GOT POTENTIAL**  
LOOKING GOOD  
GREAT STUFF  
SURE-THING



Anarchy reigns hard in this bullet storm of... you know what? **We don't do metaphors**





It's a better present than undies



...or death via this thing

# The 3rd Birthday

It's a monster mash

## The Pitch

Guns, girls, monsters, guns and shapeshifting. On your PSP

## Info

FORMAT: PSP

GENRE: ACTION

EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: SQUARE

ENIX

PLAYERS: 1-TBA

Another third-person action game on the PSP. It kinda needs a second stick, which makes us wonder why Square Enix didn't wait until the NGP was launched to take advantage of it – we're pretty sure that since fans that have waited over 10 years for a sequel another one wouldn't hurt.

It's a franchise that's gone under the radar. The original was an RPG-cum-action game; random battles with monsters, similar to *Final Fantasy VII*. It was never released in PAL territories. *Parasite Eve II* made it beyond Japan and America, and was more of a survival horror title with battles happening in real time. You still had to increase the capabilities of Aya, your character, to survive.

Both games had nightmarish creatures, and the third game in the series continues the fight

with these creatures that are taking over the world. Aya's humanity's only hope, so she picks up a choice selection of automatic weapons and gets stuck in.

It's more action orientated this time around, with a cool mechanic that lets Aya jump into the body of an ally or enemy, transporting her around the stage. This gives her the advantage of attacking from different vantage points, and in a way it's similar to Square Enix's other body-invading game *MindJack*. That was awful, this looks a lot better. Diving into an enemy with low health equates to an instant – and gory – KO.

It's a stylish looking game too, with crisp visuals and really pretty cutscenes. Your character can be upgraded over time to make her more of a bug-killing machine. We're looking forward to playing this more. **Paul Taylor**

## They Say

"Combining all-action third-person shooter gameplay with rich character development, weapon customisation, awesome missions and a gripping suspense-filled story, *The 3rd Birthday* delivers incredible visuals unmatched among portable games"

## We Say

This franchise isn't afraid to make changes to the formula, although why now?

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
**LOOKING GOOD**  
GREAT STUFF  
SURE-THING

# Dissidia 012 [duocim] Final Fantasy

What is [going on with] that title?

## The Pitch

*Final Fantasy* characters put up their fists and beat the piss out of each other. Again

## Info

FORMAT: PSP

GENRE: FIGHTING/RPG

EXPECTED RELEASE:

MARCH

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: SQUARE

ENIX

PLAYERS: 1-TBA

The original *Dissidia* back in 2009 was a hybrid mix of RPG and fighting game. It mixed together dizzying visuals and abstract battlegrounds with slight twists on standard RPG elements – HP and BP, or Bravery points as your gauges to whittle down – to make something that was brand new. If you love *Final Fantasy* it was essential.

Now, the bizarrely punctuated sequel that's actually a prequel. The back story could take up most of a page, but it basically sums up how the forces of Cosmos and Chaos came to be fighting each other. In the single player game you'll be battling in self-contained arenas whilst exploring a world map, and some of the character's

storyline's cross over with each other on the way.

The fighters from across a great range of *Final Fantasy* titles have a lot of personality, and they reflect how they fought within their original titles. Lightning from *FFXIII* is great addition and will feel familiar to fans of that game. She's ideal for long range attacks and aerial scrapping with her massive sword, while Tifa, who feels a bit plain at first, uses a blend of magic and physical attacks.

All partners can also be called in to help, and while you don't directly control them they can be part of powerful skirmishes. This inclusion lends itself to pretty tight battles, as weakened opponents are bolstered by your regular attacks and will launch assist moves of their own. It's definitely looking like a fighter with depth.

**Paul Taylor**

## They Say

"More characters, missions, costumes and combat features, the world of *Dissidia* just got a whole lot bigger"

## We Say

It's a slightly complex system but one that *Final Fantasy* fans demand. At this stage it's destined to be an excellent inclusion to the Fantasy universe, but lacking in broad appeal. Everyone will appreciate that it's very pretty, though.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE  
NEEDS WORK  
GOT POTENTIAL  
**LOOKING GOOD**  
GREAT STUFF  
SURE-THING



Is that cape really gonna improve your chances with the ladies?

The dolls have served their purpose better than you could know.



Boy or girl? Jury's still out

I am afraid that does not concern you at present



# Valkyria Chronicles III

Who likes short skirts?



"Hi there, my eyes are absolutely massive"



Rough translation: Yes. I am compensating for...

## The Pitch

Realistic WWII infantry tactics, jazzed up with anime-style razmataz

## Info

FORMAT: PSP

GENRE: STRATEGY RPG

EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA

DEVELOPER: SEGA

PUBLISHER: SEGA

DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

PLAYERS: 1

Fans of the original *Valkyria Chronicles* on PS3 groaned inwardly when upon first hearing the news that their beloved WWII-inspired SRPG franchise was jumping ship to the PSP. Those who actually gave *VCII* a go were pleasantly surprised; it was a splendid adaptation of the original games innovative blend of turn-based and real-time combat.

*VCII* did have problems, however, and they largely stemmed from its presentation. Its military academy setting gave rise to some corny-as-hell high-school sub-plots, certain key cast members were shallow and irritating, and since the character upgrade pre-requisites dropped randomly, the end-game dragged out into a frustrating grind-fest.

All of these faults have been fixed in *VCIII*. The story concerns the misadventures of 'The

Nameless', a Dirty Dozen-esque black ops unit staffed entirely by disgraced military and political criminals. The main characters have more plausible motivations, and the overall tone is much, much darker. All your soldiers can now change their classes, and you have far more control over their skill perks and upgrades. Your tank can be highly customised, just like in *VCII*, and you can now field up to nine troopers, up from *VCII*'s six; holding the control points that link map zones together won't be quite the chore it once was.

Oh, and around half the troops at your disposal are hot chicks in short skirts.

They've even brought back the battleship-sized enemy mega-tanks from the original. The only major feature to get the chop is multiplayer; while passable, the co-op and versus modes in *VCII* will hardly be missed. **James Cottee**

## They Say

"In an era where everyone is busy, we felt PSP was best in order to make *Valkyria Chronicles* bigger"

## We Say

Disregard the haters. *Valkyria Chronicles* on PSP is actually pretty awesome.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE

NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING

# Monster Hunter Freedom 3

RSPC what now?

## The Pitch

Fighting game depth combined with MMO addictiveness; Conan on crack

## Info

FORMAT: PSP

GENRE: RPG

EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

PLAYERS: 1-4

Released in Japan last December as *Monster Hunter Portable 3rd* this is easily the most refined and feature-packed instalment in Capcom's signature dragon-slaying action/RPG franchise to date. Building on the lessons learned from *Monster Hunter Tri* on the Wii, it's rendered with a fantastic all-new graphics engine, and delivers a far more organic, entertaining and unpredictable experience than in the last PSP edition, *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite*.

Whether you're hunting wyverns, lava-burrowing reptiles, or giant pigs, all the monsters you'll face have more erratic attack



She had the kind of low-poly curves that could clip right through your loins

patterns. Yet as the fight wears on, they'll get tuckered out, and start making unforced errors. Key *MHFU* favourites like the Tigrex and the Nargacuga return, and new foes include giant rabbits and armadillos. You'll meet new colour swaps at high rank, too, like the Ice Barroth and the Sand Barioth.

All 12 existing weapon classes return, and all have new combat moves to master. Bow users can charge up their attacks and rain down mortar-like hails of arrows; perfect for inflicting KO damage, and for hitting those hard-to-reach places. The recital system of the Hunting Horn has been completely reworked, and the Light Bowgun and Dual Swords classes are far more agile and versatile.

You can take up to two Felyne companions out on single-player quests, and stacks of tweaks and improvements have been made to the interface.

The only down-side is that certain Capcom executives aren't convinced it would be profitable to release *MHF3* in the west. Let us hope they change their minds. **James Cottee**

## They Say

"We do want it but from a business perspective, things aren't penciling for a straight up Western release"

## We Say

4.2 million Japanese gamers can't be wrong. Give us our *Monster Hunter*!

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE

NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING



Cherish local wildlife, kids. Nah, just kidding. Kill and skin 'em all!



# THE GRAND OLD DUKE OF PORK

After a ridiculous amount of time  
between drinks we finally get a chance  
to Nukem all and let God sort 'em out

Words: Adam Mathew

**D**uke Nukem Forever starts with a noise that is close to our OPS hearts and is also the perfect summation of its designer's humorous, sexual intent.

The unzipping sound.

Our scene then fades into view with a urinal and a thick, frothy stream spurting out of the king himself. "Come on," Duke growls when we take too long directing this spray with the right stick and **W** "It's time to get this big guy back in the action." Truer words have never been spoken; after a 12-year hiatus in development hell many gamers had thought that *DNF* was becoming a very ironic reference to the racing acronym: Did Not Finish.

As we're having our intimate hands-on time with Duke (pun intentional), Randy Pitchford wanders over to tag our copy of OPS (see boxout) and to chat.

"Can you believe this is actually happening?" he asks with a ready smile and a hearty handshake.

"I cut my teeth making *Duke Nukem 3D*" he tells us. "It was my first job in the games industry. I went to Dallas, to Texas, to join 3D Realms and worked with Alan, Todd, George and Scott – the guys who created Duke. I came at the very end and most of my work is in episode four of *Duke*. I was a level designer and it was great fun to work with those guys. That was my first job in the industry."

So deep a bond he had with the franchise, Pitchford jumped at the chance to save the Duke when his flame was about to go out of the

videogame industry, forever. There's little doubt in our mind that Pitchford is sincere but we can't help but wonder at the quality of the production he has inherited. Over the course of a dozen years *DNF* has witnessed setback after setback and has been hospital passed to a few different teams thanks to a seemingly never-ending financial hopscotch.

## COME GET SOME

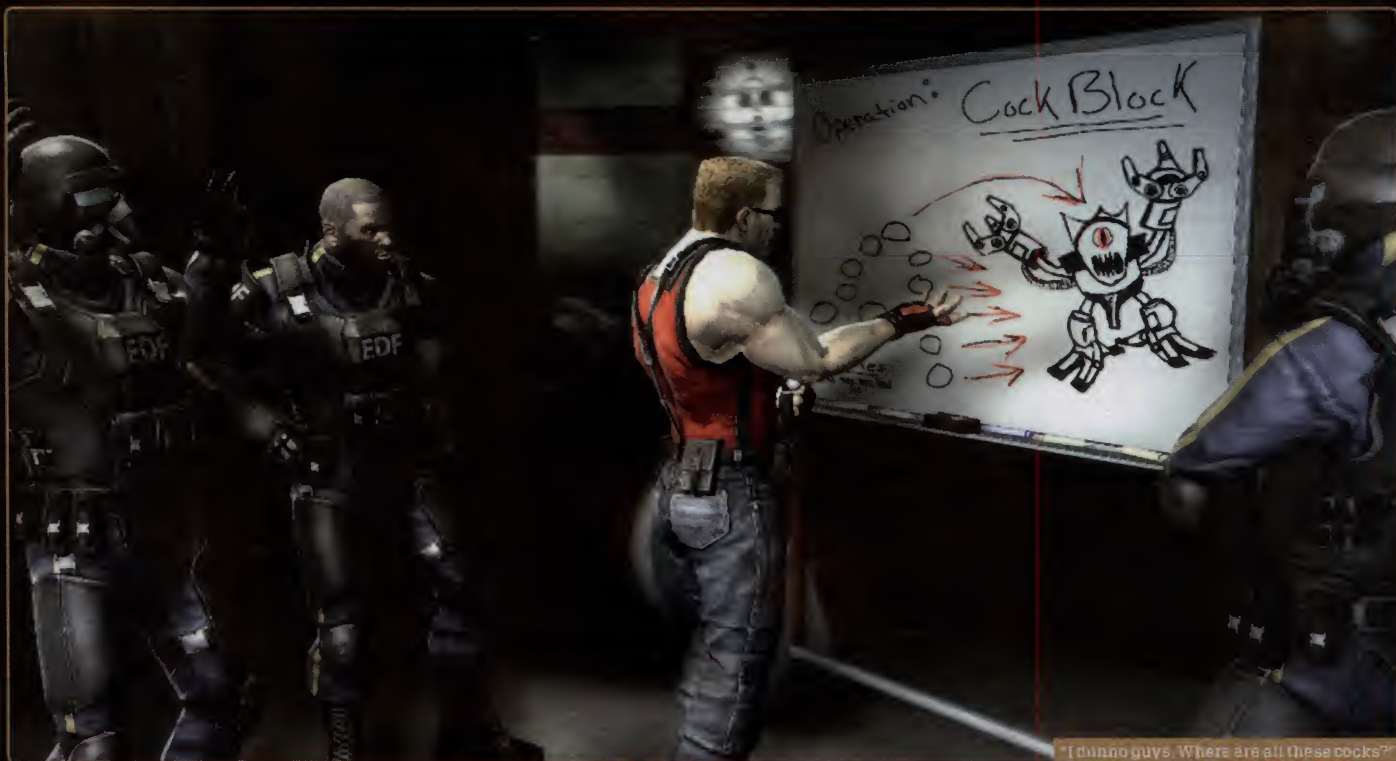
We tell Pitchford that we'll catch up with him at the after-party (in an actual Vegas strip club rechristened as 'Duke Nukem's Titty City') and we turn back to the *DNF* demo. A quick wander about the locker room with Duke reveals the sort of hilarious incidental interactivity that was a hallmark feature of 1996's *Duke Nukem 3D*. Our time soon becomes wasted on a drawable whiteboard with the words "Operation Cockblock" written under the hand drawn image of some sort of a cycloptic alien. Similarly, we discover a deuce that can be snatched out of a toilet and thrown like a weapon. A good 10 minutes is lost splattering it on walls, mirrors and some Earth Defense Force soldiers that are milling about the locker room.

When we eventually make our way outside and into a gridiron stadium we're confronted with a 20-foot tall, living version of Operation Cockblock. Scooping up a nearby Devastator (i.e. dual wielding









missile launcher fists) Duke makes an overtly penile reference and we take the creature to task. The boss fight controls and plays out much like any other FPS out there. We use a zoom function on **13** to zero in our rockets on the creature's eye, we side-step his obvious counterattacks and use a sprint function to reach ammo drops marked with red smoke.

The creature falls and we're given a treat followed soon after with a twist. Duke rips out the Cycloids eye and boots a field goal. Once that happens the camera meta-zooms out to reveal that the whole scene has just been a game within a game. The king has been playing with himself again. Figuratively, of course. As he puts down a videogame controller we see that the job of "playing" is actually being handled by two blonde girls – "The Holsum Twins" – who are placed below eye-level and well south of Nukem's equator.

They wipe their mouths and ask him if it – Duke

*Nukem Forever* – was any good for him. "Yeah," the big man replies. "But after 12 f--king years it'd better be". We agree with the sentiment and pause to wince a little over how the ladies in our lives will react to the scene. We then navigate off into the "real world" of *Duke Nukem* to see if the meta-statement is true.

## GONNA RIP US A NEW ONE

The first two levels of the game are fairly non-combative romps through Duke Nukem's skyscraper/casino/TV studio in Vegas – The Ladykiller. This palace in the sky has a larger gold-to-pearl ratio than a rapper's grille and, of course, Duke makes his home on floor 69. Through some scripted interactions with staff and clamouring fans



"Hail to the King - Randy Pitchford"

You get zero points for guessing what we drew here





The offending mothership. You'll flip it the bird too



and TV monitors it is made obvious that Duke is the saviour of the human race, he's the most popular, most famous, and richest person on the entire planet. The world is looking to him at the moment because aliens have parked an *Independence Day* style ship over Vegas in order to have peace talks with the president of the US and the military. Duke is told by the powers-that-be to make no ass-kicking actions whatsoever.

Before the (proverbial) defecation hits the oscillation we get to do a number of cool things. Wandering about the studio gives us the opportunity to doodle out an autograph for a kid (no words, just an object). A look backstage reveals a Christian Bale looking guy ranting at a hapless staff member (we punch him out). Later still there's a museum dedicated to Duke's games set up and we get a great hit of nostalgia by playing a fully working pinball machine, complete with classic remixes of the Duke Theme. But what's surprising about all of the aforementioned is that each throw-away task has a purpose: they improve Duke's Ego meter.

Being an invincible Chuck Norris figure, Duke has no health you see. The worst you can do is bruise his ego. In practical terms Ego is a rechargeable shield mechanic whose maximum potency gets increased by doing Duke-worthy stuff. Sometimes that means taking a quick check in the mirror to remind yourself that, damn, you're lookin' good "

Being an invincible Chuck Norris figure, Duke has no health you see. The worst you can do is bruise his ego. In practical terms Ego is a rechargeable shield mechanic whose maximum potency gets increased by doing Duke-worthy stuff. Sometimes that means doing violent things, other times you'll just need to win at a fully-functioning pokie machine, or take a quick check in the mirror to remind yourself that, damn, you're lookin' good.

We're exposed to more of these pursuits when the aliens invade and Duke has to descend into "The Duke Cave". We shoot hoops in his gym to bulk up our Ego and even pump some iron.

Halfway through this "guns show" we get a chance to pop some 'roids via the left D-pad and use the rage boost to literally punch the torso of an alien into mush, leaving behind only a collection of limbs and very surprised face. Soon after we're introduced to a similar mechanic on the right D-pad: beer. It's a risk/reward option that lets Duke absorb much more enemy fire than usual, but reduces his vision to that of a two-sip Sally.

Hmmm, that's not the hard-drinking Duke we remember from our childhood. Perhaps his age is showing a bit?

That feeling is soon reinforced a bit more when we (finally) get our hands on some gunplay. We get to traipse through the a fairly linear path of vents and grates, all the while blasting fairly stupid alien enemies. They hide behind propane tanks in some cases and buzz above our head on jetpacks when the architecture opens up to allow for it. They retain their oldschool cheapness too; some enemies opt to teleport out when they take damage, only to reappear elsewhere. Often behind us. This less palatable design is offset by the gore of their deaths, Duke's ever-present smack talk and the ability to execute downed enemies to insta-recharge Ego.

"Quit bleedin', pussy" he offers one grunt before uppercutting his head clean off. Another pigcop disintegrates from a shotgun blast as Duke growls, "My balls, your face." '80s action movie aficionados will be in heaven here thanks to a tonne of one-liners lifted from the greats. "If it bleeds, I can kill it" Duke trumpets proudly when we use Duke vislon (read: night vision) to sneak up and punch out an enemy who is feeling about blindly in the darkness. The phrase, "when I said I'd kill you last - I lied" and a gun twirl is our reward for doing a headshot with the M1911 pistol (sans ironsight - DNF has none).

## SHAKE IT BABY

The bulk of the alien threat on the tower is halted in yet another boss battle when Duke rides a shaft up to the rooftop and unloads on the mothership with a cannon. It sounds like a standard-issue on-rails section, but turns out to be the most bizarre difficulty spike we've experienced since *Dead Space's* Asteroid Defense System. The idea is to huri





Makin' bacon. How do you like yours done?

“The fabled shrink ray comes into play as well when Duke Nukem is shrunk down and the furniture in his casino becomes an amusing platforming section.

This puny predicament soon becomes a vehicle section when the diminutive Duke gets a toy car off a small boy and a very approving comment from his mother (dressed in a ‘Got Milf?’ shirt)”



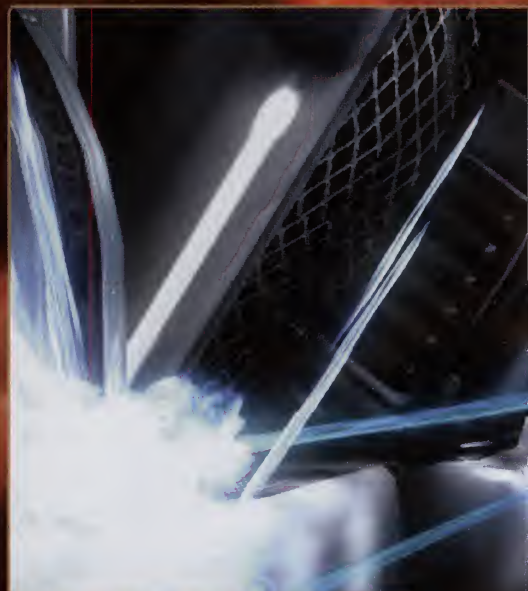
laser abuse at the big saucer's weakpoint whilst managing your gun temp and dropships that show up to spew out jetpack troops. Just when you think you have it beat, fighters attack you in swarms - and to let one through means death.

It certainly was a low-point in the proceedings. When Duke does deliver the final blow he is knocked backwards off the gun and starts to go unconscious as a lift lowers him back into the tower. Before he blacks out he gives the exploding ship the finger. We catch ourselves doing the exact same thing to the TV as well.

It's at this point that we realise that the gameplay experience is not quite as polished and up to date as a game with 12 years of development behind it ought to be. That said, we also recognise that with every negative feeling in that direction we're having an absolute blast with every crass, over-the-top 'Dukeism' we get to perform. The old-school nature of the game design also becomes refreshing in a way. Rather than ploughing through a linear level doing that same old snap-lock-kill-repeat dance, *DNF* breaks up the action with lateral thinking puzzles.

Yep, the game with the gloriously one-dimensional beefhead is shaping up to be more of a cerebral challenge than an entry in the esteemed *Call of Duty* series. Who'da thunk it?

Two instances of great puzzling are using an RC truck to push a much needed Energy Cell out of an otherwise locked storage room. The fabled shrink ray comes into play as well and turns the furniture of Duke's casino into an amusing platforming section. This soon becomes a vehicle section when the shrunken Duke gets a toy car off a small boy and an approving comment from his mother (dressed in a 'Got Milf?' shirt). Between here and the Particle Expander Pad (read: re-bigafier) it's a matter of navigating through the debris, driving over the toes of trigger-happy aliens and ramping off sweet jumps with the turbo boost. In one case, the latter jumping required us to land on the nether-regions of a reclining babe statue. Très subtle.



In this picture you ca- "arggggh" [captionist dies]



Pig-men, Jerry, Pig-men





*“Duke Nukem Forever appears to be the ultimate love-letter to the '90s, both in game design and in tone. This is why we left our demo session with the unmistakable sensation of wanting to play much more of it”*

## FAIL TO THE KING, MAYBE

But, once again, there are a few WTF puzzles that put a bit of a downer on the experience. Some solutions to problems require you to smooch your virtual face against an object in order to inch it into position, which isn't a super intuitive way to go about things. Likewise you'll have to save a chick stuck in a runaway elevator by deftly applying an emergency brake and managing another temperature meter. She suggestively screeches at you to pull harder each time and remarks she'll "go down with you anytime" when you're done. We imagine it'll be funny the first time and a pain in the arse on every subsequent attempt.

We'd also be remiss if we didn't mention how unimpressive the graphics were in our hands-on with *DNF*. Coming fresh from *Killzone 3* to this, with its sharpish geometry and general lack of smoothness, was pretty jarring. Animation and visuals are functional at best, and there were quite a few times when we saw missing elements. In the games defense, Gearbox head Randy Pitchford did forewarn that some shaders were missing from our demo build of the game and that the team at Trypitych were still working on ironing out some 3000 bugs. Even still, the game has to pull its socks up pretty high, very soon to get itself up to scratch with current day standards.

But, just as the rollercoaster that is *DNF* dips us downwards with concern, it manages to ratchet right back up again with silliness and absurd antics that elicit a chuckle. Duke gains access to trip mines that can be strapped to squealing live enemies and the holoduke – a virtual version of The King used


to draw fire – makes a return also. It's interesting to note that the former trap weapon can be set off manually by scooping up a nearby rat and hurling it through the laser sensors. If you're near a bathroom we imagine any floating battleships could be flung to (literally) cause that crap to explode too.

Similarly, with each level that unfolds we can't help but revel in the nostalgic return of everything we loved about *Duke Nukem 3D*. Stepping outside features the appearance of the Ripper machine gun and an RPG that locks onto many shotgun riot pig cops and mid-sized bosses tearing up the Vegas strip.

*Duke Nukem Forever* appears to be the ultimate love-letter to the '90s, both in game design and in tone. This is why we left our demo session with the unmistakable sensation of wanting to play much more of it. There's no denying that we expected more from it technically but that feeling has been tempered by the pitch-perfect Dukeness of the production and the lessons *Gran Turismo 5* taught us about over-anticipation. With such a wide chasm of time separating this and *Duke Nukem 3D*, our expectations may be unfairly distorted.

Though we don't expect *Duke Nukem Forever* to melt anybody's minds we are of the impression that it will give the safe, sensible and often repetitive shooter genre a much needed kick up the clacker.

Much like that rowdy, second uncle that reappears after a decade to crash your family lunch with flatulence and dirty jokes, *DNF* has the potential to be a hilariously fun/slightly ugly link to the past that nobody should have forgotten about. Such a relative is just as likely to offer you 10 years worth of good ol' times as he might a decade's worth of emotional baggage.

Stay tuned our review of *DNF* to see what sort of ratio you're in for. 



Late in January, Sony Computer Entertainment announced the successor to the PSP, codenamed NGP. It looks incredible so here are

# 10 REASONS WHY NGP IS GOING TO BE KING OF HANDHELD GAMING





## 1 Anyone who owns a PS3 will be familiar

Take one quick look at that design and obvious it's already making more sense than the original PSP. The NGP's layout mimics a DualShock more so than the PSP ever did. Two thumbsticks is a must for modern gamers. The 47.9 million people worldwide who own a PS3 will be immediately comfortable grasping and controlling a NGP. As the sticks aren't nubs there's plenty of movement in them and both of your thumbs will be symmetrically placed.

Though there's only two shoulder buttons, there's a touch-sensitive surface on the back that can be used as the **L2** and **R2** analogue equivalents.



## 3 It's easier to play with friends

Near, one of the applications built into the NGP, works with the device's in-built GPS to track and map your location. It also connects to the PSN, and displays the titles of games that other people in the same area are playing at that time. This way you can figure out what to play with whomever, and when. You'll also be able to buy games from within Near so if everyone in the street is playing *Call of Duty* you can join in too.

## 2 Intuitive controls

Sony is promoting five aspects of the NGP's controls: touch, grab, trace, push and pull. It's about manipulating things in three dimensions, and since touch screens are de rigueur for mobile devices it's crucial that the NGP uses this tech. It actually has two touch sensitive devices: the 5" screen on the front, and one touch-sensitive pad on the back.

So, if you see something that needs grabbing you can 'pinch' it with your thumb and forefinger on the touch screen, or even squeeze it by applying pressure in the same spots on opposite sides of the NGP. See where this is going? Plus, it has the same gyroscope capabilities as the DualShock and SIXAXIS controller, and the accelerometer of the Move controller, so you can rotate, flick and move it to interact with games, too. The possibilities for unique and exciting games with this new interface are vast.

## 4 Casual gamers are going to love it

Touch screen gaming, traditionally seen as one of the facets of casual gaming, has exploded. In the US the amount of games sold through the iTunes store went up from \$115 million in 2008 to \$500 million in 2009. As of September last year 1.5 billion entertainment apps and games had been sold through iTunes. Games such as *Flight Control* and *Angry Birds* are insanely popular thanks to their pick-up-and-play nature. They don't need complex movements to get the most out of them, and that massive 5 inch OLED screen on the front of the NGP is a perfect interface for such titles. And, because you can be connected to the PSN through a 3G network or Wi-Fi, you'll be able to log on to the PSN and buy games in a second.



5

## Hardcore gamers are going to love it

At Sony's Tokyo event there were a few games announced, shown running and teased. A working version of *Uncharted* had Nathan Drake climbing vines, picking off enemies and swinging through a forest. As you look down the scope of a sniper rifle you could move the NGP to aim for the guy on the other side of a valley thanks to the gyroscope and accelerometer. Activision came on stage and said *Call of Duty*, one of the world's most popular gaming franchises, was going to be on NGP. Other big PS3 games will be on there too: expect to play *LittleBigPlanet*, *Wipeout*, *Killzone* and *Resistance* and more games for the hardcore – just look at list of developers to the right! Trophy support will also be incorporated into NGP titles, and some games will have DLC that you can download to the NGP game card.

### ▼ Symbolism

The rear touch pad is covered in PlayStation symbols and looks damn cool.

6

## It's like having a PS3 in your pocket

The Tokyo event at the end of January held quite a few surprises. Capcom showed off the intro to *Lost Planet 2* running on NGP, and Sega had a real-time cutscene from *Yakuza 4*. Epic Games demoed a title that was originally made for PS3 but they ported it to NGP in about a week. Impressively, Konami's Hideo Kojima showed off a sequence from *Metal Gear Solid 4* on NGP too. It's his dream that you'll be able to play your PS3 games on the NGP, save your progress and then carry on with it on your home console. "This dream is going to come true in the near future, and right now I'm working on this project. I'm sorry right now I can't disclose further information, but I'd like to present what we're doing at E3."

And while the resolution is 960x544 on a 5" OLDE screen it's going to look bright, crisp and bold. The PSP's resolution is 480x272.

But it's not just games that's going to make this a PS3 in your pocket. The PSP could talk to your PS3 and interact with PlayTV, and also stream content from your console over the internet or Wi-Fi. We think it's a safe bet you can do the same on NGP.





# 7

## There's a massive stack of developers already on board

Developers from around the world are keen to make games for the NGP: here's the list that's confirmed as of January 27, roughly 11 months before it's launched towards the end of the year.

### Japan

Acquire Corp.  
Alvion inc  
AQ interactive  
Arc System Works  
Arika  
Artdink Corporation  
Ascii Media Work  
Capcom  
Chun Soft Co.  
Codemasters  
Crafts & Meister  
CyberConnect2  
D3 Publisher  
Edia  
Enterbrain  
FromSoftware  
Gameloft  
Genki  
Grasshopper  
Manufacture  
GungHo Online  
Entertainment  
Gust  
Hamster  
Hudson Soft  
Idea Factory  
Index Corporation  
(Atlus)  
IREM Software  
Engineering  
Kadokawa Games  
Konami  
Level-5  
Marvelous  
Entertainment  
media5  
Namco Bandai  
Nihon Falcom  
Corporation  
Nippon Ichi Software  
Nowproduction  
Q Entertainment  
Sega  
SNK Playmore  
Spike Co  
Square Enix  
SystemSoft Alpha  
Tecmo Koei  
Tomy  
Tose  
Ubisoft  
Yuke's

### North America

Activision  
Capybara Games  
Demiurge Studios  
Epic Games  
Far Sight Studios  
Frima  
High Voltage Software  
Kung Fu Factory  
Paramount Digital  
Entertainment  
PopCap Games  
Powerhead Games  
Trendy Entertainment  
Ubisoft (again)  
Warner Bros  
2K Games  
2K Sports

### Europe/PAL

Avalanche Studios  
Climax Studios  
Codemasters (again)  
Eurocom  
Developments  
Eutechnyx  
Exient  
Firemint  
Gameloft (again)  
Gusto Games  
Home Entertainment  
Suppliers  
Impromptu Software  
Rebellion  
Rockstar Games  
Sidhe Interactive  
Sumo Digital  
Team 17 Software  
Ubisoft (again, again)  
Zen Studios



# 8

## You'll be able to play multi-player games wherever you are

Okay, so that comes with a caveat: you have to be in a 3G-enabled area. The NGP will be able to connect to a 3G network (expect to provide your own SIM card) and will also be able to use a wireless router to connect to the Internet and play multiplayer games. LiveArea, the front-end interface that's used instead of the XMB, will update with live message boards, meaning you can communicate with others about the games you're playing or want to play next, and figure out where they'll be so you can play together, together.



## 9

## It's monstrously powerful

Tim Sweeney, founder of Epic Games, noted that thanks to the multi-core GPU and multi core CPU that the NGP delivers four times the performance than any other mobile platform. According to *Gameindustry.biz* Sony showed off a few first-party NGP titles to staff from various third-party studios at its London HQ. One of the attending staff said that *Wipeout* on the NGP was "the *Wipeout HD* PS3 engine [you see] running on PS3 with no changes to the art platform. That means full resolution, full 60fps. It looks exactly the same as it does on PS3 – all the shader effects are in there".

The NGP's game card, which looks a lot like an SD card, has the potential to allow for massive amounts of data. The amount of GBs that can be crammed onto memory card the size of your finger nail is reaching 32GB. Consider that a Blu-ray can hold 50GB and we're creeping close to monumental amounts of data in your hands for massive, sprawling games.

We'll admit the CPU and GPU specs are jargon we can't relate to but it all adds to a unit that's left a lot of people with a funny walk.

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>CPU</b>                     | ARM® Cortex™-A9 core (4 core)  |
| <b>GPU</b>                     | SGX543MP4+   |
| <b>External Dimensions</b>     | Approx. 182.0 x 18.6 x 83.5mm (width x height x depth) (tentative, excludes largest projection)  |
| <b>Screen (Touch screen)</b>   | 5 inches (16:9), 960 x 544, Approx. 16 million colors, OLED<br>Multi touch screen (capacitive type)  |
| <b>Rear touch pad</b>          | Multi touch pad (capacitive type)  |
| <b>Cameras</b>                 | Front camera, Rear camera  |
| <b>Sound</b>                   | Built-in stereo speakers<br>Built-in microphone  |
| <b>Sensors</b>                 | Six-axis motion sensing system (three-axis gyroscope, three-axis accelerometer), Three-axis electronic compass   |
| <b>Location</b>                | Built-in GPS<br>Wi-Fi location service support   |
| <b>Keys / Switches</b>         | PS button<br>Power button<br>Directional buttons (Up/Down/Right/Left)<br>Action buttons (Triangle, Circle, Cross, Square)<br>Shoulder buttons (Right/Left)<br>Right stick, Left stick<br>START button, SELECT button<br>Volume buttons (+/-) |
| <b>Wireless communications</b> | Mobile network connectivity (3G) , IEEE 802.11b/g/n (n = 1x1)(Wi-Fi) (Infrastructure mode/Ad-hoc mode), Bluetooth® 2.1+EDR (A2DP/AVRCP/HSP)  |

## 10

## It's a multimedia device

Think about all the stuff PSP can do. Music. Movies. PlayTV. The new music service Music Unlimited (see page 82) has over 6 million tracks that can be streamed to mobile devices, and we're betting NGP will be one of those with access to it. The OLED screen is going to be glorious to look at, and it's large too, so movies and photos will be crisp.

The two cameras built into NGP are a higher spec than the camera on PSP. We're imagining taking photos and integrating them into Facebook and other social media sites, or shooting video and uploading to Youtube. With all these options and technology implanted in the unit there's a lot of potential. Apps market, anyone?



### ▲ Game changer

The NGP will alter portable videogaming in more ways than one.



## ► INTERVIEW

We spoke to **Michael Ephraim**, the managing director of Sony Computer Entertainment Australia, about the NGP to get more info. Here's what he had to say



**OPS: What games are Sony (and the third parties) planning for on releasing for launch?**

**ME:** Activision announced *Call of Duty* which was very exciting while Tecmo, Konami and several others talking about the device and how excited they were. Akihiro Suzuki from Tecmo-Koei was very excited about the potential for delivering cross platform games, [that is] PS3 and NGP playing the same games. The list of publishers on board is extensive, and all we can say right now is there's a lot of excitement in the publishing and development community and there will be a lot of support, but we can't confirm anything for launch.

**OPS: Any hint of a price at this stage?**

**ME:** Nothing we can comment on at this stage.

**OPS: The next major dedicated handheld is dabbling in 3D. Were 3D graphics considered when NGP was being designed?**

**ME:** The Research and Development team considers all options that will deliver the most compelling set of features, and that will all be revealed on launch, but I think you can see the innovation in this device with a front touch screen and rear touch pad that's never been done before, two analogue sticks, two cameras. I think everything is being considered and we'll see what the unit has at launch.

**OPS: Why do you think the NGP's going to be a success? The PSP Go wasn't as much of a commercial success as we'd hoped, and while there have been more great PSP games lately - *God of War: Ghost of Sparta* being a great example - there haven't been many blockbusters. What's going to be different this time around?**

**ME:** Again, the innovation of the publishers we have to work with, and how people can interact with the game. With a front touch screen and back touch pad you have more options, and as was said at the press conference of PS3 and NGP are a lot closer [in terms of technology specifications] than PSP and PS3. So, I think those factors will give developers a lot more motivation to work for this device.

**OPS: Why have Sony settled on flash-based memory rather than continue with UMD?**

**ME:** Flash allows for storage, so if you have a memory card you can download additional content to the card that has the game on it. I think it just gives us more flexibility.

**OPS: What size will the game cards be at launch, and what size is Sony hoping to expand them to since SD cards, a popular format, can be a hefty 32GB?**

**ME:** That hasn't been finalised at this stage.

**OPS: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube access are pretty important for consumers when using handheld devices, and the PS3 integrates with Facebook as players earn Trophies. How will NGP interact with these social media sites?**

**ME:** Social interaction and connectivity is important, and in addition to any sort of interaction which might be possible they announced LiveArea. That could easily incorporate social media within there, but nothing specific's been stated.

**OPS: There's an impressive list of third party developers on board, but we've noticed two big ones - EA and ZeniMax - are missing. Do you expect these two companies to jump on board, and are there any others that haven't RSVP'd to the NGP party?**

**ME:** I don't think there were a lot missing - we saw Activision, Ubisoft, Sega, THQ and many more. I just think it's a matter of time of working with the developers and publishers and then getting their heads around the unit before everyone's on board. As you can appreciate for publishers there's a lot of fragmentation so, everyone has to look at their business models and see what works best, but that list is quite extensive. I don't know if other formats have had 100 per cent support from every single publisher prior to launch.

**OPS: There are two inbuilt cameras in the NGP. Will they be used exclusively for games or can people take photos and shoot video for their own usage?**

**ME:** You were able to shoot videos on the PSP 3000 for your own use and these are much higher quality cameras. I'm making an assumption that you'd be able to do at least what you could do on the PSP.

**OPS: We haven't heard much about NGP's multimedia functionality, but we assume that we'll be able to use it for playing music and video. Can you confirm this for us?**

**ME:** We don't have details, but the whole idea of this device is that if you can play PS3 games [that have been converted to NGP] and the power this can generate and the way mobile devices are going, I would be surprised if there isn't a multimedia functionality when you look at the movie service, the VidZone service, or even Play TV and way these all operate between the PS3, PSP and PSN. I would assume this would continue and be enhanced, though there was no definite announcement. An interoperability and multimedia ecosystem within devices is where things are going. People want their devices connected. I'm sure we're listening to consumer trends and I would doubt we'd go backwards from the PSP 3000.

**OPS: Sony has fully-fledged NGP games, and the Android-based games as well, so how will PlayStation Minis fit into this strategy?**

**ME:** NGP will be able to play Minis, PSP titles and PSone classics, plus the NGP games developed specifically for it. What's clear is with handhelds now is that the consumer enjoys a variety of games; deep, involved titles to [casual] games, so NGP plans to deliver that, as with the Mini, PSP title. The NGP won't play Android games that are on the Android marketplace.

**OPS: Will there be other apps available?**

**ME:** That hasn't been announced yet.

**OPS: Tell us more about LiveArea. Why was the XMB dropped in favour of this?**

**ME:** This is a new GUI and LiveArea can realise the NGP concept of connecting, communicating and receiving information wherever you are. It's a community service, and in regards to the XMB this required a new user interface.

**OPS: What do you like the most about the NGP, and what do you think other people are going to like the most about it.**

**ME:** I think there are quite a few features here. The OLED screen looks extremely impressive. When PSP 3000 came out it was the best screen on the market, and for a handheld I think the OLED screen surpasses that experience. So that's a great visual improvement.

The touch pad on the back, it's potentially a game changer if the publishers embrace it. On *Little Deviants*, where you touch the back of the screen and it affected the whole environment by raising the floor. The NGP has the SIXAXIS motion control function, too [for motion sensing gaming]. I think the total package of innovation with the touch pad on the back, SIXAXIS capability, touch screen on the front, and the *Uncharted* demos where you can sneak up on an enemy that's standing by the cliff face, just touch the front of the screen to flick them off the edge. Even going through the forest on a vine, you can use SIXAXIS to propel your swing.

I think the total package of the interaction of the consumer and the game has never been done before: when you combine dual analog sticks, touch screen on the front [and touch pad on the back], plus the normal game controls like the d-pad and the action buttons. I think that could change the way people have always been playing games. DS came out with two screens, and that was innovative. With the cameras on *Everybody's Golf* you're using the camera in a sense to be the person in the game.

We're all extremely excited. The potential of achieving the cross platform integration of NGP and PS3 it definitely takes the interoperability of PSP with PS3 into a whole different realm.



# "GAMERS HAVE TO RECLAIM THE MIDDLE GROUND THAT ALL THE POLLS ARE SHOWING THEY OCCUPY... THIS MEANS GETTING HOLD OF R RATED GAMES AND SIMPLY STARTING TO SELL THEM OUT TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN A FORM OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE"

Fighting words from Fiona Patten of the Australian Sex Party – but has it really come to this?

Words: Luke Reilly

**S**ex Party leader Fiona Patten is a veteran campaigner on a variety of issues, censorship being one of them.

In late January Patten contributed a piece to [abc.net.au](http://abc.net.au) containing a strong message to the Australian videogame industry.

"Last month's decision by the State and Commonwealth Attorney's General (SCAG) to again deny Australian gamers an R rating for their fave pastime was entirely predictable," wrote Patten. "They've been playing this cat and mouse game with adult classifications for over 25 years with X rated films.

"Gamers in Australia should not be fooled into thinking that 'it will happen next time'. It won't. In five years they will still be waiting and the Ministers will still be promising."

Patten went on to deliver a blunt ultimatum to gamers and the gaming industry itself.

"What they have to do now is what the X rated video/DVD industry did after waiting for over a decade for sensible and modern law reform on their issues. They told the censorship ministers to stick it up their collective bums and 'come and get us'. This means getting hold of R rated games and simply starting to sell them out to the general public in a form of 'civil disobedience'."

Robbie Swan is the public officer of the Australian Sex Party and shares Patten's pessimism. It's not surprising. The adult industry has been lobbying for classification reform longer than the videogame industry, and with similar public support figures.

"Neither weight of public opinion nor reason nor logic will achieve censorship reforms while religious

ideologues control the censorship process," says Swan. "SCAG is the peak censorship law reform body in Australia and it requires an absolute majority of its members to agree to a censorship change before it can happen. "There is always going to be at least one and up to three attorneys-general who are religiously inclined and their religious beliefs simply will not allow them to agree to sex and violence as entertainment. They don't care that 80 per cent of Australian adults want change. You have to understand their mindset on this. They honestly see themselves as God's agents in these matters."

The adult film industry and the videogame industry are obviously very different creatures but the parallels between each of their unsuccessful campaigns for classification reform are surprisingly similar.

**"THEY DON'T CARE THAT 80 PER CENT OF AUSTRALIAN ADULTS WANT CHANGE. YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR MINDSET ON THIS"**

It's for this reason adult retailers finally began to simply break the law.

X rated films are rated so by the Classification Board and are legally available, yet the law forbids them being sold outside of the ACT or the Northern Territory. Many retailers these days simply sell them anyway, which is what Patten is proposing for the videogame industry.

But how does that work for the sex industry?

"The Australian Classification Board runs the

Classification Liaison Scheme which is supposed to be a small unit of public servants who go around to DVD and publications retailers telling them what their obligations under the Act are," says Swan. "Instead they have formed themselves into a little 'enforcement' unit which goes around the country dobbing in retailers who sell X DVDs to the police.

"The federal government has just increased the number of these 'porn police' to four and so all adult shops in Australia will now get a visit once every couple of years. And they'll go to court and get fined or in extreme cases go to jail. They have to factor these fines into their budgets or they won't survive.

"The police generally don't want to know about this and most magistrates have also seen their share of X rated films and think its nonsense so they only fine

them a few hundred dollars for a first offence. Things can look pretty grim though when you're up for your third offence."

The question, of course, is would anyone do the same thing in the games industry? The issue gets muddy because X and RC are two distinctly different categories. The Sex Party does not support the sale of RC films and nor would they support RC videogames but the types of games we're taking being about would likely be titles that would be rated R18+

if the category existed; say, a game with an 18+ certificate in a country like New Zealand.

"Civil disobedience only works when you have a number of factors in place," writes Patten. "First you have to have the majority of public opinion behind you. Second, you need to be selling a product that a good percentage of police, judges and lawyers have seen or purchased themselves and who have a good number of family and friends who do the same. Third, you need a national





network of retailers who will hold the line in the face of the first prosecution or two and who are prepared to fund the occasional 'not guilty' plea on as well."

However Interactive Games and Entertainment Association CEO Ron Curry is against the idea.

"The iGEA has a long tradition of working collaboratively with regulators and other stakeholders, and we'll continue to do so until we can determine a classification system that allows Australians to make informed decisions on their entertainment choices regardless of the medium or delivery method," says Curry. "Our member companies' interests often stretch far beyond gaming and any act of "civil disobedience" would do nothing to maintain their existing good corporate reputations."

We chatted to a few retailers but none would be drawn into speaking about whether they'd sell a refused classification videogame.

Mark Langford, managing director of Australia-owned Gametraders, reiterated his support of an R18+ classification because it "would inform parents of the suitability of games for their children" but stopped short of discussing whether the retailer would sell an RC game in an act of defiance.

Other representatives we spoke to deferred comment to Ron Curry.

The laws regarding the sale of unclassified computer games are clear and it's an offence to sell them in all States and Territories. In NSW the maximum penalty for selling a game classified RC or an unclassified computer game that is subsequently classified RC, for instance 100 penalty units (\$11000) or 12 months prison for an individual, or 250 penalty units (\$27500) for a corporation. In Western Australia it's \$10000 or imprisonment for one year for individuals and \$50000 in any other case. ▶







# "THERE'S A LARGER CLASSIFICATION DEBATE THAT NEEDS TO BE HAD. OUR CURRENT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM HAS SERVED US WELL BUT IT WAS DESIGNED FOR AN ERA WHERE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES WEREN'T EVEN ON THE HORIZON, SO IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT IT'S PASSED ITS USED-BY DATE"

What can we do in the meantime? Not a lot. Until proper classification reform is achieved mature games will continue to walk a tightrope between MA15+ and RC.

Civil disobedience is not on the gaming industry's agenda, so if there's a game refused classification in the near future don't expect to be able to buy it, despite clear and overwhelming public support.

So what can you do? Little, unless you're willing to break the law yourself.

The laws regarding ownership of games that have been refused classification are typically confusing and partially meaningless.

Classification of all media is defined at the Commonwealth level by the Classification (Publications, Films, and Computer Games) Act 1995. This act is in place at the state level under various names to define how the Commonwealth Classification Act is enforced and define additional levels of control.

It's a lot of legal mumbo jumbo, really, but the short and curly of it is that it's permissible to own an RC videogame in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory provided you are not going to sell it. Additional clauses vary from state to state and specifically outlaw things like displaying RC games to minors, demonstrating them in a public place or keeping RC material in a place where other non-RC material is sold.

The exception is Western Australia, where the Classification (Publications, Films, and Computer Games) Enforcement Act 1996 explicitly forbids possession of RC videogames. Western Australians must not possess or copy an unclassified game that would, if classified, be classified RC or a game classified RC under threat of a \$10000 fine.

We have been unable to trace

any examples of this law being enforced as it appears there have been no announcements or publicity about prosecutions.

So the rules on possessing an RC are slightly inconsistent across the nation, but the skinny is that it's legal provided it's for personal use only and you don't live in Western Australia, right? Well, yes.

But how are you going to get it here?

Nobody is going to sell it to you inside Australia so your only choice is to import it from a country that doesn't treat its adults like children. Unfortunately, you can't really do that without flirting with the law.

Material that has been classified RC cannot be imported into Australia without permission. It has been confirmed to us by a customs official that, under subregulation 4A(1A) of the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956, RC games are 'objectionable goods'. Material that is considered to be objectionable or has been refused classification is a restricted import and requires permission (from the Director or the Deputy Director of the Classification Board no less) to be imported. These types of goods may be detained or seized by Customs.

Unless you were caught bringing in commercial quantities or were stung on multiple occasions it's unlikely to result in much more than a letter. Customs are aware that for every consumer who knowingly seeks out RC content there are also many who are just taking advantage of favourable exchange rates.

Admittedly, examples of customs seizing RC videogames are rare. Unless specific intelligence was received that indicated a package contained a restricted import any confiscation would likely be the result of a random search. Customs don't have the manpower to look at every single package that comes into the country

## "IT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THE SYSTEM... NEEDS TO BE MODERNISED"

and your game is unlikely to be targeted unless it smells like drugs or gunpowder and has a beagle barking at it.

The point, however, is that while it's legal to own RC videogames in most of Australia is not legal to import them into the country at will. It's this kind of self-defeating bullshit that makes you forget that this was a country founded by criminals.

So where to now? Minister for Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor announced before the last SCAG that the federal Labor government was in favour of the implementation of an R18+ for videogames. As we know, some of the Attorneys-General disagreed and the system remains unchanged.

O'Connor and Attorney-General Robert McClelland

have since announced they have asked the Australian Law Reform Commission to conduct a review of classification in Australia in light of significant changes in technology, media convergence and the global availability of content.

"As Australia's foremost law reform institution, the ALRC is well suited to lead this important work. The Commission previously conducted an inquiry into laws relating to classification and censorship in 1991," said McClelland.

O'Connor confirmed that current classification categories would be considered as part of the review.

"It has become increasingly clear that the system of classification in Australia needs to be modernised so it is able to accommodate developments in technology now and in the future," said O'Connor.

"When the National Classification Scheme began, classifiable content and the way it was delivered to consumers was relatively static. Today, films can be watched in a cinema, on DVD, on TV or downloaded. Many videogames include significant film segments to tell stories, and some films have interactive content. The National Broadband Network will increase this ready access to classifiable content."

Curry welcomes the move.

"Like Fiona Patten, the interactive entertainment industry is certainly disappointed that Australia is still without an R18+ rating for games," he says. "While its introduction is crucial, we also have to consider that there's a larger classification debate that needs to be had. Our current classification system has served us well but it was designed for an era where digital technologies weren't even on the horizon, so it's no surprise that it's passed its used-by date."

"Our entire system undoubtedly needs a revamp, which requires us to work closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including the government, to find a better solution."

The best solution, if there is one, would be some a form of self-regulation.

One of the stated aims of the classification review is to look at "minimising the regulatory burden" placed on the Classification Board.

Systems that do just that and see the games industry itself classifying its own products are already in place in the US and Europe.

The US Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is a non-profit, self-regulatory body that independently assigns age ratings and enforces advertising guidelines.

Europe's Pan European Game Information (PEGI)

system came into use in April 2003 replacing many national age rating systems with a single European system. The PEGI system is now used in over 30 countries and is based on a code of conduct to which every publisher using the PEGI system is contractually committed.

Would a similar system here in Australia work? Curry thinks so.

"I think there's certainly a place for self-regulation and Minister O'Connor agreed last year it was a 'path we may have to look at,'" he says.

It's happening in the UK as we speak. In the UK games are rated by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). The government announced some time ago that PEGI ratings would be introduced as the sole age ratings for games. The move has recently been delayed until at least September this year but it's happening nonetheless.

Unfortunately, after two decades of pursuing their own classification agenda Swan seems quite certain that nobody is any closer to any positive reform.

"With 38 per cent of federal MPs admitting to membership of the Parliamentary Christian Lobby... the cards are stacked against the supporters of 'smut' as they see it," says Swan.

"The three Christian parties, Family First, the DLP and the Christian Democrats, on their own are fairly impotent at election times. But when you put their two or three per cent of the vote together and they use it as a bloc, then six or seven per cent has the potential to swing half the seats in the country. That's why both Liberal and Labor give ground on censorship matters to them.

"They need to change the rules to make it a majority vote. If this had been the case R rated games would have been legal five years ago."

## IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, JOIN 'EM

The Sex Party's Robbie Swan is of the opinion South Australia's Gamers 4 Croydon ought to have expanded to the federal level.

"Outside of the four major parties – Liberal, Labor, National and Greens – there is a need for the minor parties on the social 'left' of the political spectrum to balance those on the right," he says. "The right has three Christian parties, One Nation, and three or four others who pop up at various elections, like the Citizens Electoral Council.

"On the left, the freedom fighters are few and far between. The Democrats and the Sex Party and sometimes the LDP. But that's it. The Gamers should have gone ahead and morphed their party into another minor party on the left to create more of a balance and develop a bloc of minor party votes that could rival the Christians."



DEAR OPS  
WHY DON'T YOU  
GROW A PAIR  
AND DESIGN YOUR  
OWN GAME?  
SINCERELY, EAT ME



Challenge  
Accepted

W

e've been challenged to design a game. A proper game; one that'd you actually want to play.

An irate (and somewhat rude) reader has deposited a virtual gauntlet into our inbox daring us – nay, demanding us – to create a game of our very own. Something solid. An idea so inspired any number of fat

cats would jump at the chance to scoop it up.

We have no idea who this reader is but they seem tired of us criticising games without ever having come up with one of our own.

It's a little left field – we've never heard of any film critics being chastised by a mysterious belligerent until they write their own movie – but we're not ones to shirk from a challenge. We won't back down. We stand our ground. Like Tom Petty.

Or Richard Petty. Probably.

We were going to need some pens and some beer. Not necessarily in that order.

We assembled on the couch, brimming with ideas yet with no real clue where to begin.

We did know that if we had one opportunity to craft a truly fantastic game of our own it wouldn't be squandered on something the world needs no more of.

It meant no first-person shooters set in space. It also meant no ATVs. Does anybody even like ATVs?

But what *did* it mean? We knew we wanted some kind of local angle. We wanted an Australian setting or, at the very least, something with Bryan Brown in it.

Making some kind of *Mad Max* game was briefly discussed but quickly decided against. Turning a universe somebody else created into a videogame would be cheating in this case.

Besides, all available facts suggest that *God of War II* writer/director









Cory Barlog is working with *Just Cause 2* developer Avalanche on a *Mad Max* game in Sweden right now.

So we moved on from *Mad Max*.

Luke initially suggested a *Wired World of Sports* game, complete with Billy Birmingham providing commentary. It'd probably be a *Move* title; a series of minigames. We were chatting to Trickstar's Heath Smith last year regarding *International Cricket 2010*, however, and they'd already floated a similar idea amongst themselves previously.

His next big idea was an open-world action game set in late '80s Sydney. It was a true mash-up of concepts; a cocktail of games like *The Getaway* and *GTA* combined with films like *Two Hands* and *The Boondock Saints*, with a smattering of TV's *Underbelly*.

The theory was that we've been the crooks and we've been the cops; it was time to become neither.

You'd be an Australian Casey Jones, a vigilante roaming from Bondi to beyond delivering justice with a cricket bat in one hand and a shottie in the other. Bikies, dealers and stubbie-wearing standover men would be your targets; and the cops would leave you alone providing you didn't make too much of a mess.

Violence, pub rock and muscle cars would be the vital ingredients. Also, Bryan Brown would be in it. That's non-negotiable.

Imagine rumbling through King Cross looking for murdering dirtbags, a knowing nod from the local coppers as you cruise past. Awesome.

Paul wanted a music rhythm platformer puzzle game blended with a free-running aspect, like if *Mirror's Edge* and *Fatboy Slim's* 'Weapon of Choice' videoclip were smashed together with *Lumines*. We figured he'd probably had some dud mushrooms on his salad roll.

Everyday you're walking down the street, whether it's to the shops, to school or the train station and you're probably doing it with your mp3 player. There's some songs that just make you want to dance, channelling the hypnotic moves of Christopher Walken, the easy-going nature of Paul Mercurio and sheer charisma of Hugh Jackman.

"So why not make the street yours and in toe-tapping style?" said Paul, grinning.

Taylor. Not Mercurio.

You'd be an Australian Casey Jones, a vigilante roaming from Bondi to beyond delivering justice with a cricket bat in one hand and a shottie in the other.



The point would be to chain together cracked bits of pavement, walls, parked cars, zebra crossings and so on as you dance on them. As the 'pieces' come towards you, you have various paths you can take to make the biggest chain, and moving objects like cars or environmental obstacles and detritus have to be tackled to rack up bigger multipliers.

It's got to be light, accessible and addictive. Your skill would be tested by hitting the beat, but you have the freedom to decide the moves – whether it's on the DualShock thumbsticks or face buttons is a hazy issue.

Regardless, the game rewards flair, but you've got to be strategic about which path you take. Street level's the main ribbon that you'll always come back to but then it gets a bit *Mary Poppins* as you take to the skies and jump across rooftops, shop awnings and so on.

Inspiration? Those games a few paragraphs ago are a good start, and so is the Fatboy Slim clip. Honestly, go and look it right now. Plus, anything Michael Jackson did on stage is a given, but you have to look cool while you're doing it. Your character would start off in sneakers and jeans but then transforms, donning a suit, or a tux: something that matches the music.

Speaking of, the music's going to be the backbone that keeps it all together. The best part is you can use any of your own tracks on your PS3's hard drive to spawn a level, or it'd have a *GT5*-style level creator where you pick the difficulty, and the amount of 'stuff' that you'd dance across.

But we wanted something bigger than that, an epic production that'd leave a crater-sized dent on the gaming world.

Then it happened. Adam Mathew, who up until that point had been silently stroking his bushranger-style beard, had a eureka moment.

"Beards are rad" he blurted out excitedly. "Beards on bushrangers are also rad. *Red Dead Redemption* was the raddest game of 2010 and it was based off an amazingly rad Aussie bushranger film called *The Proposition*. Connect the dots, gentlemen!"

We were thunderstruck. His idea made perfect sense: we would stop trying to make a game, go watch *The Proposition* and grow beards instead. Red, dead-sexy, redemptive beards.

After the film ended and we calculated the time to it'd take to actually grow said facial hair we got bored with the idea and decided to adapt it back into our game-making template. The concept as a rootin' tootin', open-world game had immediate, magnetic appeal.

First of all, the setting was quintessentially Australian and yet it sported a common denominator that would endear it with a broader worldwide audience: sticking it to the man.

On the topic of worldwide distribution we did however debate as to whether we should name the game "Bushranger". American markets unfamiliar with the Aussie "bush = forest" term might assume the gameplay to be of a pornographic nature. If this idea panned out and we did have to name it we vowed to think outside the box, so to speak.


After only a short time of historical research on bushrangers we

American markets unfamiliar with the Aussie "bush = forest" term might assume the gameplay to be of a pornographic nature.

found out that they were some seriously bad-arse folk, arguably much more violent and unpredictable than the glamorised outlaws of the American wild west. Bushrangers like Mad Dan Morgan earned their monikers through bullets, blood and in some case bat-shit insanity. If you stepped outside of a township in colonial Australia you were basically walking out into a no-mans-land. These dudes were the demons of Van Diemen's Land.

But they weren't just handy at blowing holes in people who (mostly) deserved it. To survive in the bush they'd need some serious survival skills to evade the law. Australia is a harsh land if you don't know what you're doing, you're drop bear meat. Epic horsemanship was also required (think: *The Man From Snowy River*) and finding enough food to keep yourself (and your horse) alive wasn't like a trip down to 7 Eleven. This unique blend of survival and skill was something that could set our game apart from *Red Dead Redemption*.

Gunplay, horseplay, 'Straylia-ness and the eating of goannas. This has got it all.

So there we had it. A bona fide concept for what could be a bona fide videogame. But there are billions of ideas floating about; is this one any better than any of them? Surely the idea is the easy part. To evaluate our proposal and give us some insight into what kind of resources, dedication and luck it takes to turn something from a doodle on a serviette to a disc on a store we'll be chatting to some friends on the other side of the fence. Interested in knowing what it takes to make any idea a reality? Stick around. 



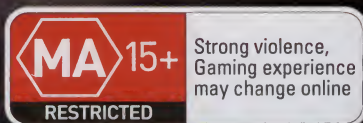


PlayStation  
Network

# KILLZONE® 3

**THEIR WORLD. THEIR WEAPONS. THEIR TACTICS.**

**THE GAME IS JUST THE START.**



**SONY**  
make.believe



# in review



► GAME OF THE MONTH

## Homefront

Tomorrow, when their war began

## Review ratings

**10 Incredible:** Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

**9 Excellent:** An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

**8 Great:** Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

**7 Good:** A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

**6 Decent:** This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

**5 Mediocre:** A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

**4 Poor:** Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

**3 Very disappointing:** Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

**2 Terrible:** Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

**1 The worst:** Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once.

## This Month

68 Homefront

72 Yakuza 4

74 Test Drive  
Unlimited 2

76 DC Universe Online

78 Marvel vs Capcom  
3: Fate of Two  
Worlds

80 Stacking

80 Spare Parts

81 Back to the Future:  
The Game Episode 1

81 Plants vs Zombies



▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.

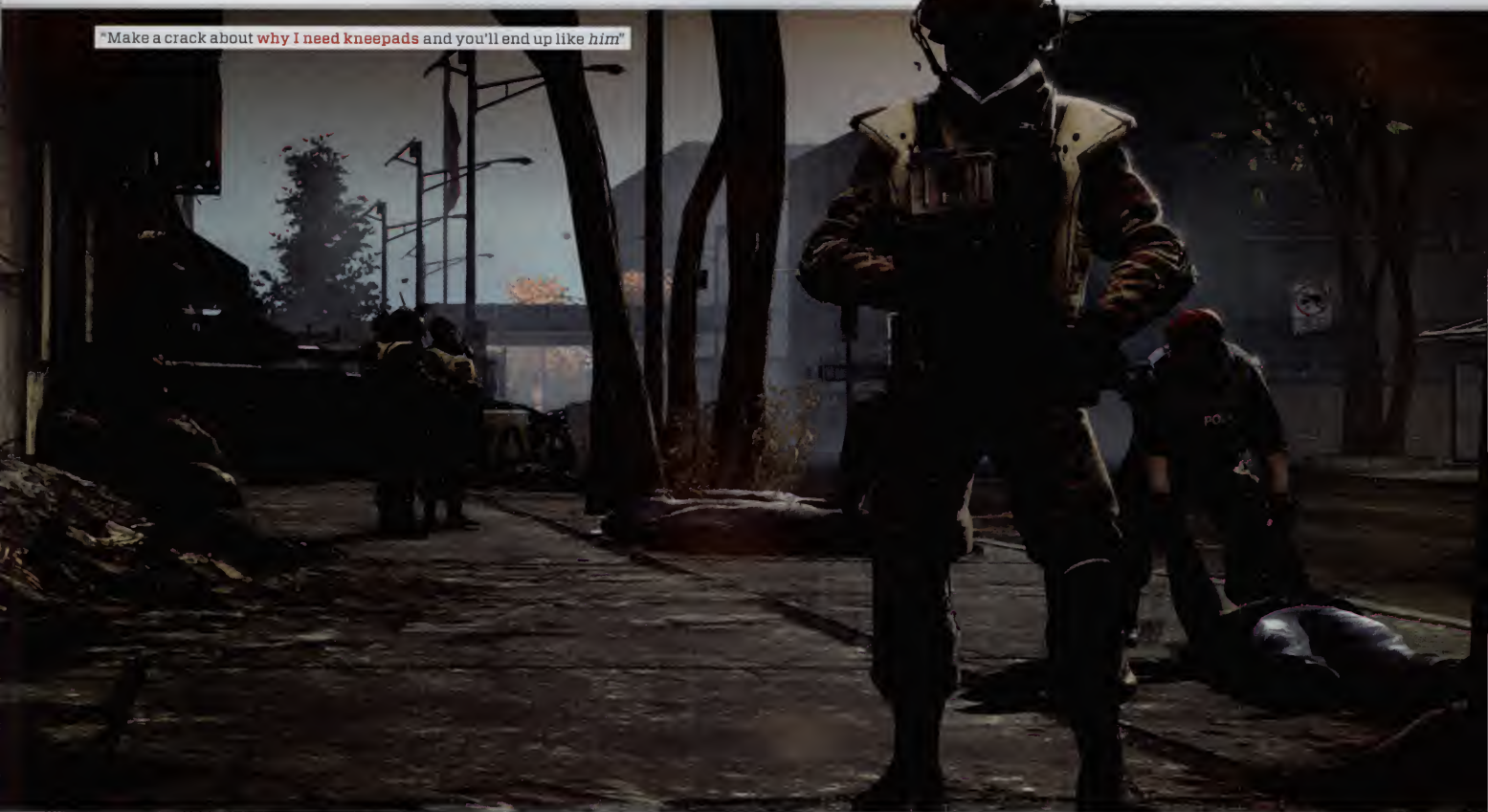




We will fight them on the bleachers, we will fight them in the trucknuts superstores - and in Hooters



\*Make a crack about why I need kneepads and you'll end up like him\*



# Homefront

Two toughest kids on the block: sooner or later, they're gonna fight

## Play this if you like

*Killzone 2, Modern Warfare 2*

## Info

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** SHOOTER

**RELEASE:** MARCH 17

**DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ

**DEVELOPER:** KAOS STUDIOS

**PLAYERS:** 1-32

**RRP:** \$109.95

A little suspension of disbelief can propel you a long way in *Homefront*. If you accept the future fiction of the USA being occupied by North Korea – by, say, pretending they're China – you'll be launched into the raddest rebellion story since *Red Dawn*. Likewise, if you forget what you know about what should happen when a grenade detonates next to a person, you'll be able to enjoy some epic action-movie kills.

Either way *Homefront* is a game that will sweep you off your feet, if you let it bend the rules a smidge.

The narrative opens in 2027; a full two years after the (glorious) empire of North Korea decides to invade the Western half of the US. You'll be donning the fingerless gloves of Mr. Robert Jacobs, a former Marine pilot hoping to keep a low profile in the hellish ghettos of Montrose, Colorado.

Unfortunately, the occupying KPA prove to be exceptional at hide 'n' seek. They find you, kick down your door and ask you to "float with efficient co-operation". Propaganda translation: they hurl you down a flight of stairs and pistol-whip you onto a school bus.

The Koreans value you for your 'Kim Jong ill skillz' with a helicopter and after re-education they hope to recruit you into their cause. They're not the only folks in town who are impressed by your resume.

If the opening cinematic detailing North Korea's rise to power serves as the placement of a nail, the introductory ride on the school bus is the hammer that slams this new reality home. Shades of *Half-Life 2* abound as you're forced to tour a city that reeks of fear, oppression and possibly Korean-style barbecue. Developer Kaos Studios proves very early on that it not only has the chops to sell such a story, but that it can weave it in such a way as to genuinely shock you. Or, at the very least, make you feel uncomfortable.

Some of this believability and emotional investment comes from intelligent scripting and quality sound design; most notably in the use of young children. Whether it's a kid curled up coughing by a fire, begging you for food – or outright shrieking at the atrocities being inflicted upon his parents – *Homefront* masterfully tugs at the heart strings in a way that really hasn't been explored in videogames before.

You'll also become tied to the experience thanks to a great supporting cast. Over the course of time you'll make the acquaintance of a four-member militia cell who are fighting a guerrilla war against the invaders. What's most refreshing about the group is that none of their number include a flag-waving,

Uh-merican stereotype. You have Connor (pissed-off renegade dude), Rianna (token plucky chick), Boone (ex-cop), Hopper (tech savant and Korean-American) and The Goliath (a semi-autonomous drone of pure comeuppance). Though these AI individuals tend to get in your way a bit too much in combat they're quite likeable, fully-formed characters who enjoy the benefit of some superlative scriptwriting by John Milus.

Rather than being some sort of pivotal hero (or Master Sergeant Shooter Important Person of Sergeants Extreme), you'll be made to feel like a simple guy doing what little he can to aid a wider resistance network. You're not saving America single-handedly in *Homefront*, you're just trying to steal some tankers full of jet fuel in order to deliver them to some regrouping US troops in San Francisco – no more, no less. It's a fairly humble mission that (thankfully) becomes fraught with its fair share of mortal danger and moral turpitude.

While it's nowhere near being in the realms of a 'thinking man's shooter', there are a great many adult themes and concepts in *Homefront* that elevate it to 'smarter than your average'. Man's inhumanity to man and the myriad grey areas that occur during war and occupation are the main conundrums




Dong-Sun and Dak-Ho are... **Police Cops: Yank Doodle Squad**

you'll face. Unfortunately there are never any real decisions or alternatives offered beyond 'stab this guy or shoot him'. It's a little disappointing, but by no means unexpected.

The meat-grinder you're in is made even more frantic by Kaos' unique approach to a gunfight. On the surface *Homefront* faithfully imitates – and indeed is as polished as – the control framework of *Call of Duty*. You'll get that tried-and-true snap, shoot and scoot shuffle throughout. That said, if you storm in with all the strategic sense of Yosemite Sam you're bound to wind up as a statistic.

*Homefront*'s slightly reduced movement speed, constant low ammo warnings and frequent weapon swapping work wonders in reminding you that you're just an ill-supplied, freelance shit-stirrer. Any firefight you can't go out of your way to avoid will typically feel like a desperate scramble for survival (until Goliath rolls up, at least).

This refreshing sense of being a constant underdog is further enhanced by short, non-combative interlude moments. *Homefront* can be quite a hectic gunplay experience, but we applaud Kaos for having the nous to apply the brakes every once in a while in order to paint a broader picture. Set piece scenes like internment camps built in football stadiums and the ramshackle base camp of the resistance look amazing, boast vivid colours and OCD attention to detail. Similarly, the bigger battles

are always edge of your seat spectacles that cleverly hide the linear, blinkered path by tricking you into thinking a much larger conflict is happening just over the back fence.

This is an idea that was perfected in the *Call of Duty* games and it isn't the only inspiration that *Homefront* draws from Activision's best-selling series. All throughout you can see evidence of Kaos ticking off the boxes in the template. Sniper mission: check. Controllable helicopter and UAV scene: yep. Unexplained slow-mo shoot out: you bet your butt. *Homefront* does little to evolve its core action beyond *CoD*. Mind you, just reaching that benchmark is no mean feat for this first-time effort.

Aiming for par is all well and good, but much like EAs attempt at *CoD* regicide (*Medal of Honor*) Kaos has made a critical error that undermines all of their fantastic work. The name of that mistake: short campaign length.

A five-hour narrative on default difficulty simply won't be enough for single-player only punters – no matter how entertaining it is. Like we mentioned with *MOH* the brevity of the ride wouldn't seem so bad if it was backed up with some co-op (online or split), or a type of score attack, Special Ops-type mode, or even a Korean Zombies mode. But without any of that, *Homefront* feels like a "family-size" bag of chips; what little you do get to digest is finger-licking delicious, but there's too much damn air in that packet to begin with.

## Homefront Part Deux?

Despite the fact that the game has not yet been released, THQ is confident enough about the quality and buzz that they are already planning a sequel.

In an interview with *VG247*, Danny Bilson stated that "Like, I know what *Homefront 2* is. It's not a repeat of *Homefront*. It doesn't take place in the same place or anything like that."

Bilson has previously stated that *Homefront* would feature stories in London and on the international stage.

Set it in Australia, Kaos. You know you want to. We're the continent that videogames forgot.

That kick in the guts is lessened considerably by a competitive multiplayer mode that proves that Kaos has more than enough online experience to piss with the big boys. As you may or may not be aware, the team is comprised of some talented folks who created the insanely popular *Desert Combat* mod for *Battlefield 1942*. That was way back in 2003, since that time they went on to create the online-specific title *Frontline: Fuels of War* and even collaborated with EA to help forge *Battlefield 2*. You can get the remainder of your money's worth here, if you're so inclined.

"Dops everybody, I didn't say **Simon says put your hands on your head**" \*gun cocks\*


Yellow shirt with camo combo? **Get ready to suffer for fashion**



Black Hawk up soon to be down



**“As a relative unknown hoping to take on a billion dollar franchise Kaos Studios has answered the call admirably”**

Tapping into that impressive wealth of experience, Kaos has essentially crafted a hybrid of *Frontlines* and *Call of Duty*. The timeline for your little backyard war is set a bit before the events of the single-player campaign, at a time when the US military is scattered but still effective against the KPA. As such, the focus is on large-scale vehicle based combat that is reminiscent of the *Battlefield* series – though, unfortunately, it lacks a similar destruction engine.

The defining innovation is Battle Points; a brilliant in-game currency system that lets you purchase weapons, gear and vehicles on the fly. Points may be earned by taking objectives or getting kills and you're always forced to choose between many small purchases (such as weapons and flak jackets) versus larger, higher cost items like gunships, ground drones, UAVs and tanks. The whole 'two teams of 16' setup is a righteous amount of fun thanks to a diverse range of classes to use and the expansive battlefield spills into brand new areas once the winner of a round is decided. If you prefer a more intimate killing zone you can always select some infantry-only, non-objectives-based maps to fulfil your base, fish-in-a-barrel needs there.

Armchair soldiers looking for something to love long-time will be pleased to know that *Homefront* has got serious legs. Whilst ranking through 70+ experience levels you can unlock 18 abilities (perks), weapons, camo and attachments for your infantry self, not to mention gaining access to increasingly lethal airstrikes and vehicle loadouts. There's enough customisation, balance and tactical variation here to keep you happily blasting away until the cows come home.

After playing a decent amount of multiplayer we were mightily impressed and only had a few minor concerns. Once anybody earns a chopper they become a golden god and it's annoying that you have to die to 'respawn in a vehicle'. Beyond those puzzling ideas, Kaos has created a fierce online contender here and we can't see ourselves getting sick of the smell of white phosphorus in the morning anytime soon.

As a relative unknown and an upstart studio hoping to take on a billion dollar franchise, Kaos Studios has answered the call admirably with *Homefront*. In a market flooded with wannabes, they've come from practically nowhere to get within striking distance of the best that the genre has to offer. It's unfortunate then that the short duration of the entire package serves to downgrade their Herculean efforts from 'on par with the big kids' to 'solid proof of concept'.

It's obvious that Kaos and THQ have realised that taking large slice of the online multiplayer pie is what's needed to make this fledgling IP successful – and, as such, they've focused the bulk of their resources in that area. For some gamers that design approach will make perfect sense. But in a country like Australia, where not everybody has the requisite speed (or even infrastructure) to get a fair shake of the online experience, many people will be left with a five hour rebellion story that won't be worth retelling to the grandkids years down the track.

*Homefront* is a tough game to rate on a numerical scale. If you're going in purely as a soloist: delay the acquisition until the price drops. If you're a gamer who enjoys a mixed diet that's skewed heavily towards online rather than off, you should scoop this up.

Even though everything didn't run fully to plan *Homefront* still represents a hard won beachhead in the invasion of the FPS genre. Given enough time and resources to regroup and co-ordinate another assault, Kaos Studios' next push could seize them a sizeable chunk of enemy territory. **Adam Mathew**

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Ignores the typical grey/brown palette of most shooters. Great character design, detail and sense of scale.

**SOUND** Meaty guns, quality voice acting and ambient noise. Marred slightly by a silly Korean version of the Wilhelm scream.

**CONTROLS** On-foot shooting feels like carbon-copied *Call of Duty*. Vehicles are refreshingly easy to control.

**REPLAY VALUE** Online will last for ages. Offline-wise, you could probably read the manual again... or something?

## Verdict

Great multiplayer. Quality, yet anorexic single-player. Knock two points off this score if you're an offline-only gamer.

**8**





"Stay clear of my popped collar. I'll only warn you once"

Play this  
if you like

Yakuza 3, GTA IV

### Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-  
ADVENTURE

RELEASE: MARCH 24

DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

DEVELOPER: CS1 TEAM

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$99.95



Real men don't exfoliate. Or wash



the streets, Kazuma springs into action, cutting a path through trash talking street punks, Triads, corrupt officials and rival gang members that, barring any massive spoilers, leads us to the conclusion of *Yakuza 3*.

In a massive departure for the series, *Yakuza 4*'s primary focus isn't centred on Kazuma. He is but one of our heroes in a series of four inter-locking plotlines. Each of the three new protagonists play their part, have wildly different backgrounds, handle and act completely differently and offer a welcome change to a franchise not known for branching out. Added to the ranks are Shun Akiyama, Taiga Saejima and Masayoshi Tanimura.

Akiyama is a loan shark with an unusual screening method, who used to be homeless and is a hero to the downtrodden. Brutal enforcer Saejima is a beyond-vicious former *Yakuza* heavyweight who breaks out of prison mere days before his scheduled execution after being incarcerated for wiping out an entire rival clan on his own. Rounding out our quartet is Tanimura, a bent cop with a love of both corruption and gambling and an agenda all his own.

Their stories converge and merge into a team up of monolithic proportions, allowing you to test drive each bit-player and delve into their past before moving on to the conclusion as an awesome foursome and flipping between them. Before you ask, no, we're not going to even begin to attempt breaking down their respective

There's very little wiggle room when it comes to the *Yakuza* franchise. If you love one, it's a safe bet you'll love them all. We feel confident with this conclusion as there haven't been too many massive changes to the winning formula, remembering that this is like *GTA* to the Japanese and consistently sells through the roof.

While the series hasn't stagnated the way other Japanese aimed titles have (*Dynasty Warriors* anyone?), it has always offered something a little different to the sandbox genre, with a distinct Nippon-esque touch. Just when you thought it was safe they pull a script-flip that blasts through like a breath of fresh air.

For those not familiar with the tale of Kazuma Kiryu will be lucky enough to hit rewind and get up to speed on his exploits via the menus, but for those without opposable thumbs here it is in the broadest of strokes – as most journeys in *Yakuza* are filled with a myriad of twists, characters and nuances of culture and criminal hierarchy to negotiate. Kazuma used to be the top dog of the Tojo Clan, a powerful *Yakuza* force, but years of brawling, betrayal by those closest to him and deaths in the family have left him disillusioned, leading him to walk away from his Clan and enter semi-retirement.

A proud man of honour, he looks to balance his karmic scales by running an orphanage and looking after misguided youths, attempting to right the wrongs of his troubled life. When a shady government plan looks to evict him from his home and force the wards in his care onto





"Can we have some change, sir? Shut up and eat my old asparagus"

The self combustion technique: it sorta only works once



journeys as it's unreal fun to uncover it yourself and it's so convoluted we don't have enough paper in this magazine to properly do it justice.

General gameplay is the usual negotiation of the pseudo-sandbox world as you hit the mean streets of Kamurocho (based on Tokyo's famed red-light district of Kabukicho). You'll be constantly beating down fools that get in your way, completing numerous fetch quests, receiving instruction from martial arts masters littered throughout the region and chasing down thugs and on the run from Johnny Law. Then, there's the trademark insanity that only the Land of the Rising Sun could offer, such as pulling numbers from hotties to get them to work in your hostess bar, going on dates, playing

pool, fishing, karaoke, bringing beers to your buddies, training prize-fighters, policing the area and dispensing your own 'street justice' and helping broken hearted NPCs move on with their lives. It's just nuts and we wouldn't have it any other way.

When you're not playing Dr Phil you'll be filling the local hospice to capacity with the fruits of your labours. Every couple of minutes, some foul mouthed street urchin will insult you for no reason, pick you as an easy mark, claim you've insulted his honour or be a representative of another gang. You know what that means, right? It's clobberin' time! The constant hand-to-hand with bottom feeders, regional kingpins and clan leaders are where this title really outdoes itself.

Combat begins rudimentarily but you

earn XP for all missions and battles and there's a deep customisable fighting system. Each member of team kick-arse has different preferences as well, so the real kicker is working out who suits your style of play and levelling them up to perfection. There are light and heavy attacks, kicks, grapples, counters, throws and you can use any of the dozens of objects conveniently within arm's reach to bring the pain. You can even use weapons like nunchucks, blades and stun guns – all fashioned, repaired and upgraded at the local weapon's smith.

As you rip these impetuous pups a new one (or by taunting), your "HEAT" meter will rise until you're literally bursting with blue flames. This is where the magic happens. Adversaries can be taken down for the count with graphic finishers that can be upgraded and extended into mini quick-time events and are on occasion, contextual, with our favourites the 'visions of American History X' guard-rail smash and the judo flip gloriously followed by a flying knee to the face. Ouch!

Those of you expecting instant gratification best move along to another playground. *Yakuza 4* is a slow burn and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. The balance between intense brawling, wacky distractions and convoluted exposition is deep and detailed and guarantees you endless hours of enjoyment. **Dave Kozicki**

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** A faithful recreation of Kabukicho and a step up, graphically, on its predecessor.

**SOUND** Great backing tracks, especially when initiating a brouhaha, and solid Japanese voice acting.

**CONTROLS** A little dated but the brutal fisticuffs are bang on the money.

**REPLAY VALUE** You'll have your honour offended and seek retribution at great lengths to knock this one out, and then there's all the side missions.

## Verdict

It's a shame a year has passed from the Japanese launch before it hit our shores. A rich, distinctly Japanese adventure that we're glad to finally have.

8

## Nani O Tabetai?

SEGA has managed to whip up a little something something outside the norm for its limited editions. With two different types choose from, there's the Shiro edition with colour coded casing, unlockable skins, exclusive battle modes, a copy of *Yakuza 3* to get up to scratch and a wicked dragon tattoo styled T-shirt. Those hungering for more can get the Kuro edition, which has the same game add-ons plus bonus Ichiban Box with a sexy hostess calendar, rice bowl and chopsticks all packaged in an attractive noodle box!





Play this  
if you like

Midnight Club: Los Angeles,  
Need for Speed Hot Pursuit

### Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: EDEN GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-12

RRP: \$99.95

# Test Drive Unlimited 2

You break it, you buy it

Eden Games' sequel to its bold open-world racer improves on the formula of huge landscapes to roam and race across.

*Test Drive Unlimited 2* is as much about social interactions as it is racing, whether that's with the inhabitants of the two islands of Ibiza and Oahu, or online players when you're connected to the PSN. It's a bummer this excellent vision is a bit drab in reality.

Where the game succeeds is also where it falls flat. The two islands are huge and your progress – both personal and measured by

the in-game levelling – relies on you exploring to find showrooms to buy cars, shops to dress up your avatar, garages to tune and paint your collection of vehicles, as well as obligatory hidden items (in this case wrecks of old cars and stunning vistas to photograph).

While you're racing you can also discover new shops but we reckon you should explore before the tournaments begin. The world begins to feel a little samey after a while, but the 'ding' of a newly found showroom makes skulking feel worthwhile. When you're in the mood *TDU2* does

well to capture the buzz of driving fast down a rural road, but when you're not it can be a chore.

On the way you can earn cash by doing *Burnout*-style manoeuvres in traffic. Close calls, slides and getting big air fill your purse when you're not racing, and it's a welcome way to fill in your time. The amount you earn increases the more you perform daring moves and you have to bank it at a certain point. Hit something and the cash you've earned on that last stretch goes back to zero. However, once you've discovered a road you can warp to any spot on it in by choosing it from the world map.

Standard tournaments are bulked out with on-the-spot races with other inhabitants. During a race you have to rely on your skill to make the podium in order to earn decent cash – close calls, skids and air don't mean squat. Winning tournaments means a substantial cash prize.

All this would be a buzz except that many of the cars lack conviction in the way they perform. *TDU2* straddles simulation and arcade handling, so you can't take a tight corner at triple figures, but you don't really feel connected to the road to make a good enough decision.

You'll also be guessing which hills you can take at speed and which you need to ease off the accelerator when approaching. Some cars will do a peculiar flip when coming off a crest that ought to send them into a graceful arc back on the road, even at low speeds. Others will land and chug back to first gear, losing all momentum.

Collisions are also inconsistent and you'll quickly find the game's sense of weight and



Legend told of a wild, untamed mustang running loose on Brokeback Mountain...





Probably not the best time to **check the glove**



Not pictured: us **getting more air** than a nerd high-five attempt



Chicken **vindaloo!**

consequences aren't right. Graze the wrong bit of grass or clip a small rock awkwardly and you're sent spinning. The same happens if you glance a tree or barrier. You do, however, have three driving settings to choose from. We recommend you pick 'Sports' (the one in the middle) to start with as the lower setting is the driving equivalent of being anaesthetised and the higher requires more patience to get a handle on.

Graphically and aurally it is pretty bland. While the framerate's fine, textures are flat on the cars, people and environments. Pop-ins are annoyingly noticeable. Engines don't have enough texture in them and there needs to be more environmental effects too. We want to hear and see gravel and dust kicking up behind us, though it gets points for forcing players to concentrate during night-time events.

When you're not racing, you need to manage your life and the premise revolves around the storyline. You're a valet whose assumed reputation as a hot-shot racer gets you a spot in a racing tournament called the Solar Crown (stay with us here). There's an assortment of playboys and princesses who make up the cast, and they weave in and out of your time on the islands. While they have an often flawed personality you'll always feel like your character is bit of a mute, meek chump: we just wanted to punch our avatar square in the face when we saw him either standing smugly at the

end of a race, or scowling like a sook when coming in second or lower.

As you buy houses you can upgrade them with new furnishings but honestly who cares? Characters (in scripted events) chastise you for having a poor taste in fashion so you need to discover places to buy new threads. Disturbingly, you're encouraged to get plastic surgery – though this is the game's way of letting you craft your avatar's appearance – for points to upgrade your rank, but it's comical and worrying to see you tottering out of surgery, bandaged up, and then getting straight behind the wheel.

The interface is a bit unwieldy, so it takes a short while to memorise how to operate it, but you'll love how you can zoom up and out of the map and the near-seamlessly zoom back into the part of the road where you want to be.

You'll probably have more fun online with a bunch of mates, as you can create races, join a club and ride around in a posse. We'll come back to see how this improves the experience, but since the driving model feels so flat we're not sure how strong the community will be.

We can't accuse *TDU2* of not offering a lot, but overall this production feels like it's had a whole studio's intentions of making something incredible but this just hasn't been realised. Each time it wows you with a neat touch it dashes your enthusiasm with something else. For instance, we get working convertibles but we don't get working windscreen wipers (odd in a game with cabin view and wet weather effects). Just when you're getting into the driving an unskippable cutscene full of people who share more in common with trust-fund babies and hotel heiresses than actual racing drivers yanks you away from the open road. And why is everyone on Ibiza American, including the police? It's jarring and cringeworthy.

*TDU2* is by no means broken though it is buggy in places, but it doesn't excel at anything in particular, either. There are better racers out there that may not be as expansive as this package, but when the racing's more impressive on a sim level by *GT5*, on an arcade level by *Hot Pursuit* we wonder how *Test Drive Unlimited 2* is going to fit into your library of games.

Paul Taylor

## It's the little things

One part that we really admire about *TDU2* is the small details, like being able to poke around and see a car's interior. As you walk around a showroom you can open and close the doors of cars, peer inside and sit in the cars (everything but an option to kick the tyres). When you get them on the road you'll even be able to swivel your head and look at the inside of the car. Impressively, convertibles have fully animated roofs. We wasted a lot of time opening and closing the roof on a few cars, and not one person gave us the finger for posing. Proof that *TDU2* really does let you live out a fantasy.

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Feels second rate. You'll see what Eden wanted to achieve, and while it has scope it's rough around the edges.

**SOUND** Silence the in-game music immediately. Effects are flat, and the voice acting and script are pretty peculiar.

**CONTROLS** Plump for the 'sport' driving model and then get used to the lightweight feel of the cars.

**REPLAY VALUE** Heaps to do, lots to discover and the online world has potential to live with the flaws and make this interesting.

## Verdict

**Loads to see and do but it lacks flair. The lifestyle aspect is intriguing but overall it feels dull rather than delightful.**

7



Play this  
if you like

Everquest, Marvel:  
Ultimate Alliance

### Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: MMORPG

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: SONY ONLINE

ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYERS: 1+ (ONLINE ONLY)

RRP: \$99.95

### Comic Book Guy

At the centre of two DC icons and the obvious reference for the character models comes fan favourite Jim Lee. Cutting his teeth on titles such as *X-Men* and his own creation *Wildcats*, Lee hit the big time in 2003 with his magnificent 12-issue arc 'Hush' depicting the Batman stalked by a mysterious and dangerous adversary. He followed up in 2004 with 'For Tomorrow' as a broken Superman confesses his most recent failures to a priest. His distinct style centres on perfect muscular proportions with a slight anime twist and an economy of line that suits *DC Universe Online* perfectly.

Pro tip: cat people don't appreciate being called pussies

# DC Universe Online

Suit up!

It was always going to be risky delving into the realm of the MMORPG; but millions of *World of Warcraft* addicts can't be wrong now, can they? The task of making it accessible to console users without dumbing down the experience was a bold move for Sony Online Entertainment and it nearly pulled it off. Nearly.

After mentally downloading our entire DC database we hit a wee bit of a snag. Namely the minimum three and a half hour install/4GB patch download before we could even start playing the damn thing! *Gran Turismo 5* seemed like a commercial break compared to this. Needless to say, we were not off to a flying start.

Our impatience slowly dissipated as the Intro sequence kicked into full swing. A futuristic brouhaha of titanic proportions has erupted as all the major players duke it out to see who's top dog. With Lex Luthor leading the charge, things look grim for the last son of Krypton and, after Supes' apparent demise, a new threat enters the fray – Brainiac. His warships begin to make short work of any super-powered entity.

As Brainiac rips our world apart, Lex escapes and travels back in time to the present day with a warning: Beware the coming of Brainiac. To this end, he releases into the atmosphere "exobytes", tiny microscopic creatures that project energy into its host imbuing ordinary humans with fantastic abilities. The stage is set for your meta-human metamorphosis, but whom will you choose to guide you on your path?

Each side has three mentors as models.

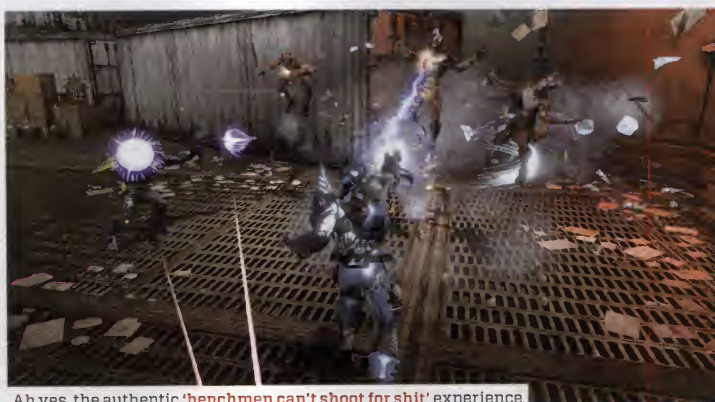
Fight for truth and justice with Superman, Batman or Wonder Woman, or join the League of Evil Exes with Lex Luthor, The Joker or Circe. There's a great sense of balance to the array of powers as well as a deep character customisation mode. You're almost guaranteed no two costumes will look alike.

Just about anything's on the menu. Flight, super-speed, martial arts prowess, longbows, dual pistols, you name it, they've pretty much got it, and you'll soon be off to protect and serve, or wreak a little havoc. Be warned this is very grindy, as you'd expect from an MMORPG. There's plenty of side missions, you can team up with other gamers for quests or just go Good vs. Evil in an arena to see who's the baddest mother on the block.

The fighting component, however, is where the game hits a stumbling block. More depth to the combat could have really made this a winner, as you really only have a dozen or so regular attacks and "specials" (and that's when you level cap out at 30) combined, so it can get old after a while. SOE may be hard pressed to sustain interest.

The appeal does compound greatly if you have any knowledge of comic book lore, and aficionados will be in their element, guffawing at the in jokes and loving the undeniable appeal of just kicking it with The Dark Knight or The Man of Steel as you bring justice to the streets, or tear it all asunder with the maniacal Joker or Lex Luthor backing your play.

**Dave Kozicki**



Ah yes, the authentic 'henchmen can't shoot for shit' experience

### Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Looks surprisingly decent with great care taken in concern to customisable options available to your character.

**SOUND** Sparse at times with the bit part voice acting a little on the weak side.

**CONTROLS** Lock on can be temperamental at times and the menu system really needs an overhaul.

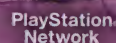
**REPLAY VALUE** It has some legs just working through your abilities but its future depends on new content.

### Verdict

Hits with a double-barrelled geeky dose of awesome as DC meets MMORPG, though those not up on to speed on crucial comic book lore might not see long time appeal here.

7





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Super Street Fighter IV,  
Marvel vs Capcom 2,  
Final Fight

### Info

**FORMAT:** PS3  
**GENRE:** FIGHTING  
**RELEASE:** NOW  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ  
**DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM  
**PLAYERS:** 1-2  
**RRP:** \$109.95

You may not have noticed, but we like Haggar



# Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds

Our pant-strap obsession continues

**M**arvel vs. Capcom 3 is Capcom's eighth fighting crossover, and this three-on-three brawler is by far the best-produced game of the series. Everything's tied together in a comic book theme, the music's excellent and the characters, stages and intro look amazing. It's a visual and aural extravaganza.

The game is amazingly accessible yet mechanically deep. Instead of *Street Fighter's* usual six-button system, in *MvC3* you have just light, medium and heavy attack buttons and an air combo button (if you've played *Tatsunoko Vs. Capcom* on Another System you'll feel comfortable here). Your individual moves with this layout are pre-set and most of the specials still make sense in this transition – Hadouken's and Dragon Punches are reassuringly familiar, as are the occasional charge attacks – though there are moments when you just want to strike out with a particular punch or kick and can't.

This is by no means a broken system, and it only fuels the madness on screen. Combos are gloriously versatile, and the air combo button – the game's biggest change to the series – replaces a down-

towards and heavy attack from previous editions. Once that connects, either used on its own or in a combo, your opponent's launched skyward where you can continue the punishment. Chain another air combo in with the button again and your first reserve character comes in to crank up the big hits, and pushing it one last time brings in the second reserve.

Fighting freaks will adore the intricacies of an advancing guard, snapbacks, and teasing out a massive combo string. If you're new to the series then the mission mode will give you a good introduction to what's possible, as you attempt to fulfil a series of tasks for each of the characters.

So, what problems could we possibly have? Firstly, there's just not enough here. Though the roster is 36-strong it's been hacked down from 56 in *MvC2*. Admittedly, there are less double-ups, Haggar's everything we hoped he'd be but some characters are either boring (She-Hulk), downright awful (M.O.D.O.K.) or a misguided attempt at fan service (Amaterasu).

Your list of favourites has shrunk too. Examples? Cammy, Sakura, you're both pretty good, but you're cut. Guile, Strider,



### DEAD SIMPLE

For absolute novices there's also a 'Simple' system that has all your melee attacks on one button, specials on another and basically a 'win the match' command on the third. On the one hand it's a great intro to people who have lived under a rock or never even picked up a PlayStation controller. On the other, it's bound to cause arguments as those using the Simple system will mash their way to victory every match. Just stay with Normal, ok?

take a long, long weekend. Oh, and series stalwart Cyclops, you're out. Venom, Juggernaut, Gambit, you're totally cut too. Capcom's already announced Jill Valentine and Shuma-Gorath as DLC and we want to know why they weren't in the final code. The end boss, Galactus, has typically cheap (but true to character) attacks and the endings are full of cheese. You won't give two squirts about or even care for the plot.

What you have is a game that feels like it only has 85 per cent of its content, and a few fighters are horrendously overpowered or have spam-tastic attacks – Phoenix and Sentinel are prime offenders. However, if it was a choice between something that looks and plays as well as this, or had tonnes in it but felt as rough as a \$3 steak, we know which one we'd pick. And it looks like we got it.

Paul Taylor

### Final Say

#### PRESENTATION

Immaculate. Dazzling animation and absolutely beautiful character model amongst the prettiest light show this side of New Year's Eve fireworks.

**SOUND** We love how fighters shout out the name of the next person to be tagged in, and the music's grand.

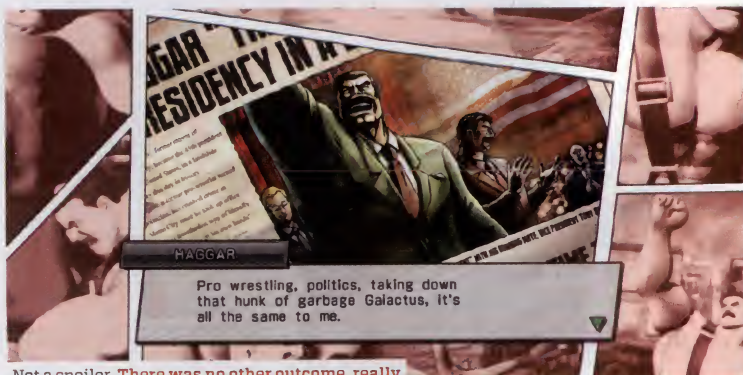
**CONTROLS** Simple to use without being dumb, and the air combo button's bound to be re-used in the future.

**REPLAY VALUE** With a like-minded friend it'll last you for the rest of the year. Solo's boring once you've cracked the missions, though.

### Verdict

Whippet-fast, pretty and smart, but lacks a few key characters. Begrudgingly forgivable, but we want more in *Super MvC3*.

8



Not a spoiler. There was no other outcome, really



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# Stacking

Stacks on

**Play this if you like**

*Brütal Legend*

**Info**

**FORMAT:** PSN

**GENRE:** ADVENTURE

**RELEASE:** NOW

**DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ

**DEVELOPER:** DOUBLE FINE

**PLAYERS:** 1

**RRP:** \$17.95

**S**tacking is the second downloadable game, following *Costume Quest*, to come from Double Fine in recent months. *Stacking* was created Lee Petty, the art director for *Brütal Legend*, during the period following the Activision/Vivendi merger when the fate of *Brütal Legend*'s publication was unclear.

An adventure/puzzle game, *Stacking* is based on the Russian stacking matryoshka dolls. The player controls the smallest doll, Charlie Blackmore, who has the ability to stack and unstack into larger dolls (if they're facing away from him) and use their abilities to solve puzzles. Charlie's aim is to free his older siblings, who have been kidnapped by an evil industrialist known as the Baron, and put an end to the child labour the Baron enforces.



Now he's only half the man he used to be

The thoroughly unique mechanic allows you to jump into and possess dolls that are one size larger than you at the time. You'll need to stack multiple dolls to get into the largest dolls, for instance. You can unstack the dolls at any time in order to enter dolls smaller than your current stack.

Certain dolls have their own special abilities that are required to solve puzzles. The various challenges for each mission boast multiple solutions, with rewards offered for finding all of them encouraging multiple playthroughs.

The world itself is a fantastic mix of Depression-era style and second-drawer clutter. Keeping with the concept of a game revolving around child's playthings the game has a similar miniature, arts 'n craft feel to the likes of *LittleBigPlanet*. Matchsticks, lollipops and playing cards form crucial pieces of the game's architecture. Cutscenes are presented in a silent movie-esque fashion, with some simple violin and piano accompanying the on-screen pantomime and dialogue delivered not via voice-overs but by title cards.

*Stacking* is simple enough but it is also bold and different, two very good reasons to check it out. **Clint McCredie**

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Simple yet so very, very charming. If games aren't art then what is *Stacking*?

**SOUND** We love the music.

**CONTROLS** The easy-to-grasp shouldn't prove too taxing.

**REPLAY VALUE** Short, although there's reason to play it more than once.

## Verdict

Wonderfully unique and truly intoxicating. Double Fine strikes again.

**8**



They're not action figures, they're dolls

# Spare Parts

That's what this platformer is made from



"Hi, I'm looking for a bumper for a '92 Daihatsu Charade. No?"

**Play this if you like**

*Ratchet & Clank*

**Info**

**FORMAT:** PS3

**GENRE:** PLATFORMER

**RELEASE:** NOW

**DISTRIBUTOR:** EA

**DEVELOPER:** EA BRIGHT LIGHTS

**PLAYERS:** 1-2

**RRP:** \$15.95

**S**loppy. Lazy. Derivative. That sums up *Spare Parts*, from its level and character design to the actual coding.

It's not a great start. If you do play it you'll be instantly familiar with how things work, from the characters' abilities to double jump and slam into the ground, as well as the monotonous combat. You could try to drag a mate into the fray with you, since this looks like it's a game that needs a co-op partner, but if you play it on your own you won't be missing out and you won't wreck your friend's day either.

At least the robots are charming as they punch and jump around the levels. Then you earn upgrades, like magnetic boots for walking on ceilings, jet boots for hovering and X-ray specs for discovering elements of a level to

Pictured: Robo-Guy and Not-Clank doing stuff



interact with. These specs are essential as without them you'll be scratching your head about what to do next.

You defeat enemies by attrition rather than any particular skill as you bash away at the attack button. You can perform combos but there isn't enough reward to bother learning them so keep pounding away.

That's a philosophy that can be applied to the rest of the game as it's more a test of your patience than a game. Live with the dicey platforming that spells death, and the loathsome environmental puzzles. Death is nearly meaningless since you have infinite lives so you just need to plough on to get to the finish. A decade again this platformer would've been passable but now it's just tired. **Paul Taylor**

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** The characters have personality and the levels are pretty colourful appearance

**SOUND** Simon Pegg's in it, and the music pleasantly rambles on.

**CONTROLS** Standard platforming layout familiar to anyone who grew up with a PS2.

**REPLAY VALUE** Low. You'll be sick of it when you're done with it.

## Verdict

Cool robots, and that's about it. There's little joy here.

**5**



# Back to the Future: The Game Episode 1

You're not thinking fourth-dimensionally!



## Play this if you like

*Back to the Future, Heavy Rain*

## Info

**FORMAT:** PSN

**GENRE:** ADVENTURE

**RELEASE:** TBA

**DISTRIBUTOR:** TELLTALE GAMES

**DEVELOPER:** TELLTALE GAMES

**PLAYERS:** 1

**RRP:** \$TBA

Go to Google and type in "Back to the Future is a terrible movie". You will find exactly *no* results because this is first time that sentence has ever been typed. We're hurting, physically – deep down in the cockles of our Cheezels-powered hearts – just putting those words together.

Happily, *Back to the Future: The Game* is the kind of title a universally adored trilogy like *Back to the Future* deserves.

Episode 1 of the five part series, *It's About Time*, takes place six months after the events of the film *Back to the Future Part III* and sees Marty McFly trying to adjust to a life without his best

friend, scientist Doctor Emmett "Doc" Brown. Doc's assets are being sold off by the bank following his disappearance to an unknown time period. Out of nowhere an intact DeLorean time machine appears in front of Marty with notes inside instructing him to come to Doc's rescue, who is stranded in the year 1931, during the time of Prohibition.

Telltale has absolutely nailed the feel of the franchise and the charming visuals are a treat. Christopher Lloyd is great as Doc Brown and newcomer A.J. LoCascio's impersonation of Michael J. Fox's Marty has to be heard to be believed. The music, a blend of cues from Alan Silvestri's memorable original score with a hint of Huey Lewis, is near perfect.

*BTTF* is an adventure game in the old-school variety but don't expect a tough puzzle-solving experience. Most veteran gamers will plunge through this without nary a speedhump; it'll take around three hours. Puzzle solutions are even occasionally reused. Einstein, for example, twice has to find a missing character using the scent from their clothing items. Also, despite sections that offer multiple dialogue options their outcome never changes.

There's a distinct lack of hoverboarding in 1931 – but with four episodes to go we're prepared to let it slide. Make like a tree and get it now. **Clint McCredie**

## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** The cool stylised visuals are backed up by some great attention to detail.

**SOUND** The voice acting and background music is near-perfect.

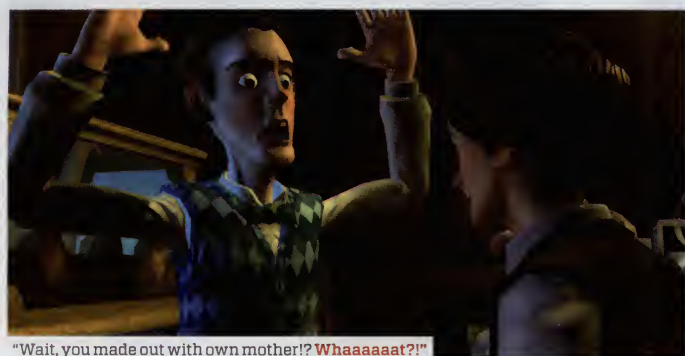
**CONTROLS** The simple, slow-paced adventuring isn't going to confound anybody.

**REPLAY VALUE** A few branching paths might've helped in this department.

## Verdict

Short and easy but it's great fun and more devout to its source material than any movie adaptation this side of *The Warriors*.

8



"Wait, you made out with own mother!?! Whaaaaaat?!"

# Plants vs. Zombies

Beware the lawn of the dead

## Play this if you like

*PixelJunk Monsters*

## Info

**FORMAT:** PSN

**GENRE:** TOWER DEFENSE

**RELEASE:** NOW

**DISTRIBUTOR:** POPCAP GAMES

**DEVELOPER:** POPCAP GAMES

**PLAYERS:** 1-2

**RRP:** \$23.95

Already available on seemingly every platform this side of the Commodore 64 the *Plants vs. Zombies* craze has finally made its way to the PS3 via the PSN.

*Plants vs. Zombies* is a tower defense game that sees players using a variety of different plants and fungi (48, to be precise) to protect their house against a zombie onslaught. You'll need to place your plants across your front lawn, back lawn and even your roof to thwart an undead home invasion. The plants each have their own set of unique offensive or defensive capabilities. The Venus zombie trap, for

instance, does exactly what you think it should. There are a number of criteria you need to learn to juggle in order to plant your seeds but it's not quite as complex as it may initially look.

The playing field is divided into a number of horizontal tracks. Zombies move towards the house on these tracks attempting the chow down on the plants along the way, while the plants try to defend themselves. In the game's initial levels a one-use tool like a lawnmower can be used to completely wipe out zombies in that track, but the tool will not be restored until the next level.

Importantly the transition from mouse and touch screen controls to a control pad has been handled well. Unfortunately it's not Move compatible at this stage.

New to the PSN version game are competitive and cooperative multiplayer modes. Versus mode is particularly good; it lets one player assume control of the zombie horde and try to outwit a mate's garden.

Even if you've already played through the game on your PC or phone the new versus multiplayer mode is worth it. **Clint McCredie**



## Final Say

**PRESENTATION** Colourful, bright and slick.

**SOUND** The much-loved music is catchy as hell.

**CONTROLS** The straightforward will suit hardcore and casual players alike.

**REPLAY VALUE** You'll be playing this one long after you've already tried to stop.

## Verdict

Charming and hard to stop playing. See for yourself what all the fuss is about.

9



There's a zombie on your lawn





### WHAT'S NEW

## PSN DEVELOPMENTS

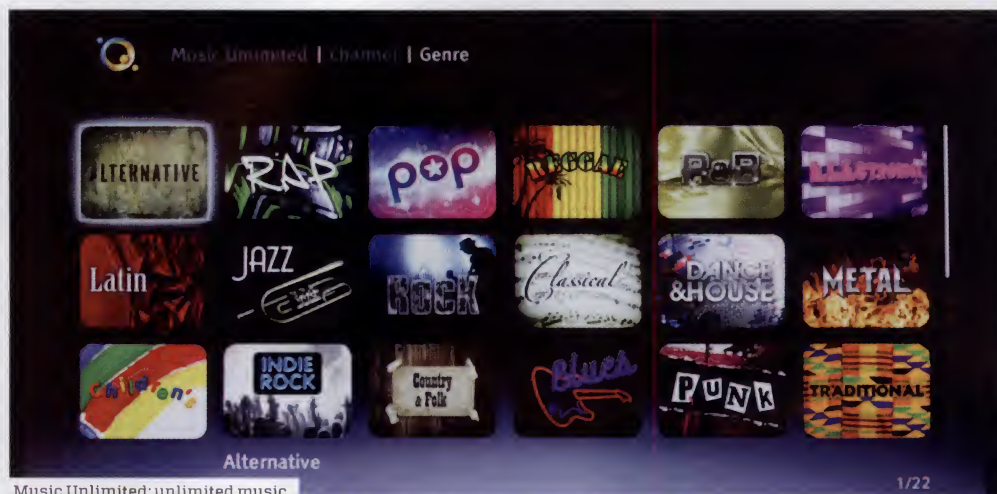
What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

**M**usic Unlimited, a brand new way to listen to music through your PS3 and other online Sony devices, PCs and Macs is about to hit Australia. This cloud-based music streaming service has a library of over 6 million tracks that you can access through your PSN account under the 'Music' icon on your XMB, and can be used with any PS3 you use.

The service is powered by Qriocity and syncs with your home music library on your PC. Rather than uploading gigs and gigs of mp3s to a server it scans the meta-data – artist names, album titles, track names, etc. – then uploads it to your account, adding these to your Music Unlimited library. It'll also recommend songs for you to listen to based on your preferences and how you interact with the service.

Of course, you don't need to have a PC, or even a music collection to begin with. Since the all the tracks are on the server you could just discover them for yourself. If you're stuck for inspiration you could listen to the channels on offer, and these act like a radio station but without chatter or ads. They're broken up into genres and 'moods', the latter relying on Sony's SensMe tech to determine what belongs where. You wouldn't, for instance, have Foo Fighters in a channel called 'Emotional'. Major record labels and independents have signed up to Music Unlimited, and we had trouble stumping it when searching for artists and songs.

The basic service, which only gives access to the radio station-like channels, is \$3.99 per month. The Premium service, which allows you to build your own library,



Music Unlimited: unlimited music

search for tracks and build playlists, as well listen to the channels, is \$9.99 per month. There'll also be a 30 day trial of the Premium service for PS3 users – hey, that's you! – so check your XMB for the Qriocity logo. \$10 a month for virtually endless tunes at your fingertips seems like a pretty good deal for music lovers. Let us know if you agree or disagree.

Finally, PSN Plus Subscribers can expect these offers during March. As usual, it's not the final list (good, because it's a bit lacking) so check back online now for more.

#### PSN:

- *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Astro Tripper* minis: *PixRev*, *Enigma*
- Exclusive discount: *Fat Princess* (PS3) – 50% off
- Exclusive discount: *Fat Princess* (PSP) – 50% off
- Exclusive discount: *Stardrone* (PS3) – Day 1 discount (date TBC)
- Exclusive discount: *PlayTV Live Chat* – 25% off – valid until July 6 2011
- Beta Trial: *SOCOM Special Forces Beta* (details TBC)
- Dynamic themes: Two exclusive dynamic themes (TBC)
- Premium Avatars: Eye Pet Avatars

## VIDZONE CHANNEL SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: Techno + Trance



### ZOMBIE NATION - WORTH IT

We don't know much about trance music, but this bunch of clips is another set that's perfect for a Saturday night...



### VITALIC - MY FRIEND DARIO

...as it looks like the music was made for the videos. These three all have phat beats, and a vague storyline...



### JUSTICE - DVNO

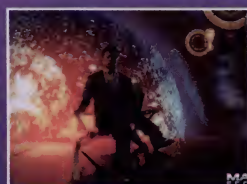
...except for this Justice clip. Here the duo is just showing off. It's very clever, though, and great for a party. Or an after-party.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available **free** on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!



## PlayStation®Network

## ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



### MASS EFFECT 2

More appealing for PSN Plus users as they get a free trial, but this BioWare epic is an office favourite. This is some of the best sci-fi available across any media and it's the RPG for people who don't like RPGs.



### PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES

PopCap's classic tower defence game finally hits PSN. It's crossing the line from game to cultural phenomenon. You won't regret grabbing it; it's addictive as hell.



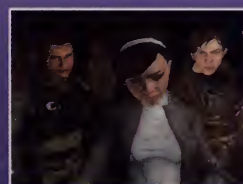
### NAIL'D DEMO

*Nail'd* is attempting to bring back wild off road racing, like *MX vs ATV* and *Pure* before it. It's got a lot of heart in a genre that's overlooked but can it do what the already excellent *Pure* could not? See for yourself.



### ROCK BAND 3 - LONDON CALLING THE CLASH PACK

More than a dozen tracks from The Clash's classic album, though 'Train in Vain' is only available via the in-game *Rock Band Store*.



### DEAD SPACE EXTRACTION

Another curio that's actually really good. This lightgun-style game fills in more of the story behind the Marker but without Isaac and his mental suit. Originally a Wii game, now Move compatible.



# WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



## PlayStation®Network

GENRE: RPG RELEASE: NOW PUBLISHER: BETHESDA DEVELOPER: OBSIDIAN  
ENTERTAINMENT PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$19.95

DLC >

## Fallout: New Vegas - Dead Money

Hit the Mojave for some cold hard cash

If there's one thing you can always be sure of it's that a new batch of *Fallout* DLC is going to throw a curve ball at you. Whether it's following a giant robot or beaming up to outer space, Obsidian Entertainment always brings something a little different from the box copy experience and *Fallout: New Vegas Dead Money* is no different.

After being serenaded by a radio broadcast promising the riches of the legendary Sierra Madre Casino, you find yourself entering a spooky bunker and taking a trip to la-la land when a burst of

knockout gas does what it says on the label. After coming to in a labyrinth like villa, you discover to your dismay you've been liberated of all weapons, inventory items and companions.

You've been kidnapped by a crazy cat named Father Elijah who wants you to work in tandem with three other companions, a scarred mute, a ghoulish crooner and a bi-polar super mutant, to break into the Sierra Madre vault. Before you start thinking, I'll just tell this mof to shove it, you and you reluctant partners in crime are joined by



"Open you mouth and say AAAAAAGHH!"

"Give me... a hug"



explosive collars around your necks, and if one goes boom, you all go boom. Quite the predicament, aye?

There's a heavy emphasis on stealth and melee/hand-to-hand combat, there are traps everywhere and intermittent speakers and radio frequencies can cause premature detonation of your shiny new necklace. Throw in new enemies, like the creepy Ghost Harvesters and invincible holograms patrolling the vault and *Fallout: New Vegas* has a whole new batch of tricks up its sleeve in *Dead Money*.



My, what green eyes you have

### VERDICT

*Dead Money* continues the *Fallout* tradition of offering interesting stand alone content with a nice twist.



## PlayStation®Network

## BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



### CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH  
PLAYERS: 1-16

Take *MW2*, and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. However, we especially like playing Zombies with a skilled compatriot.



### RED DEAD REDEMPTION

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN  
DIEGO PLAYERS: 1-16

The connection issues that bothered us are well and truly fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challengers. Much better as a co-op experience.



### SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM  
PLAYERS: 1-4

It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



### FIFA 11

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS  
PLAYERS: 1-22

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort. Get on it right now.

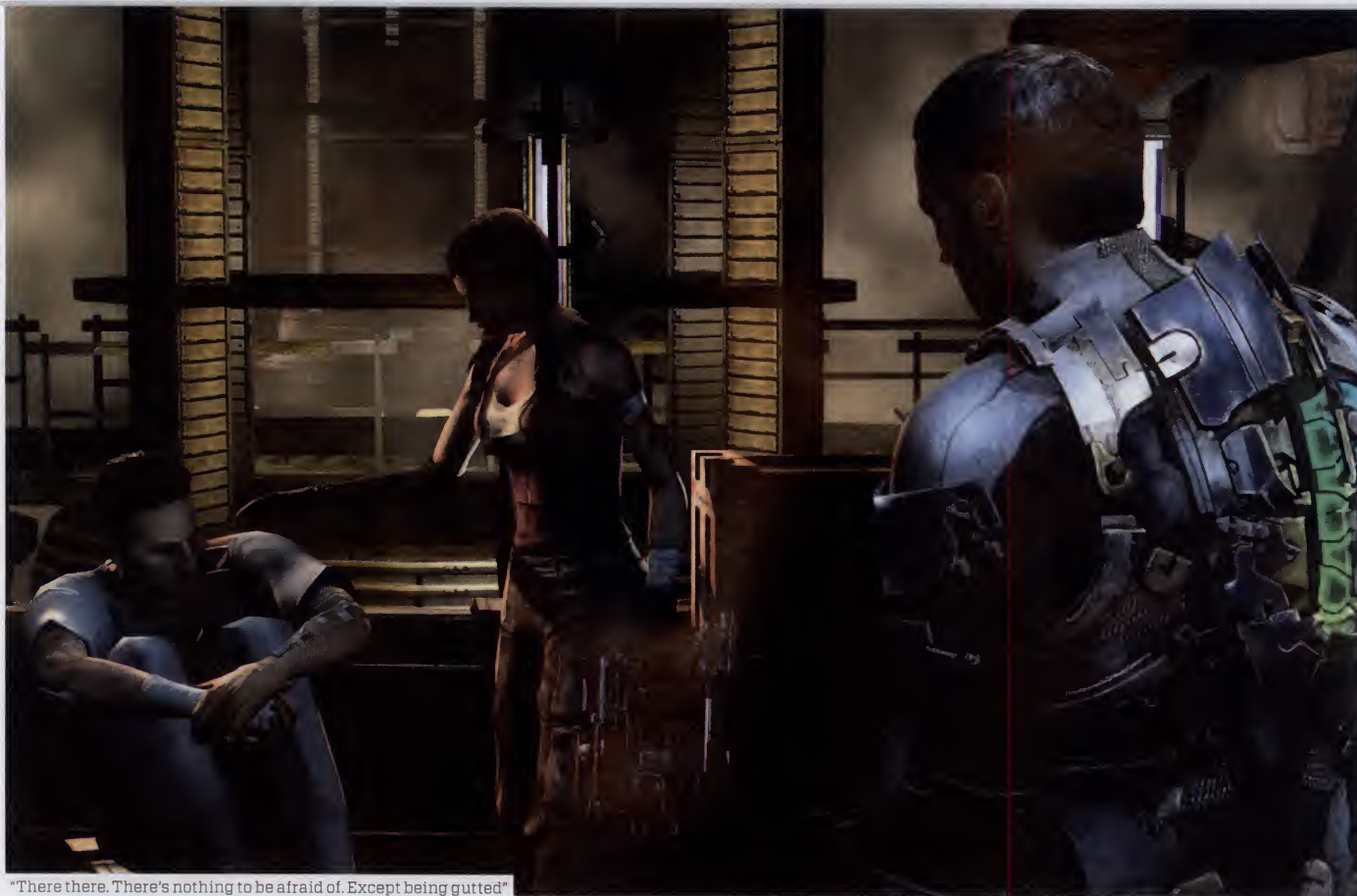


### BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

DEVELOPER: DICE  
PLAYERS: 1-16

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves.





"There there. There's nothing to be afraid of. Except being gutted"

GENRE: ACTION RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: EA DEVELOPER: VISCERAL GAMES PLAYERS: 1-8 RRP: \$109.95

Multiplayer >

## Dead Space 2

They're coming out of the goddamn walls

**D**ead Space 2 introduces radically new elements in its online multiplayer. For starters there's an asymmetrical adversarial setup – as a human member of the Sprawl's security forces, you'll have the same weapons (and penchant for dismemberment) as Isaac Clarke. Conversely, everybody playing as a necromorph can defy gravity, upchuck acid death and move like lubed-up ninja (according to type).

The balance becomes even more questionable when you take into account that, as a space zombie, you may be less armoured than the 'hoo-mans', but you can spawn right on them through vents and other space station orifices.

The multiplayer shenanigans are set across one of five objective-based maps inside all-new sections of the Sprawl. As a human you must assemble a bomb from three parts, collecting the pieces before taking them to an allocated point on the map. Once a team member has the bomb it's up to other human players to protect the bomb carrier from incoming death from above, behind, pretty much every angle there is.

On the opposite side of sanity are the necromorph players who have more a clear-cut mission: stab anything that has less than six limbs and feast on the goo inside. No tutorial required there, Timmy.

Before you do slither into the Sprawl and mess somebody's day up real bad, you're given the choose to play as one of four different types. The Pack is a short range type with a powerful swiping melee attack. Lurker is a long range oriented class able to spider-walk up walls. Puker, offers ranged attacks by targeting with **Q** and then pressing **Q** will unleash a mighty spew. The final class, Spitter is another long-ranged bastard creation that can fire out charged blasts.

With such a powerful and putrid force arrayed against the humans, teamwork becomes absolutely key to survival. In many a match we tried to play the lone wolf hero only to get ripped sixteen new cornholes for the effort – and each time this happened in under 15 seconds.

Trust us. You need a good team, you need a smart leader and you need them now. Gathering together such a core group of professionals can be quite a feat in today's climate of online stupidity and douchebaggery.

We were lucky enough to hook up with some like-minded buddies for a few matches and we had a blast playing *Dead Space 2* online. But even as a hardcore, coordinated human team of *Dead Space* veterans pitted against disorganised necro-yahoos, our survival was by no means guaranteed.

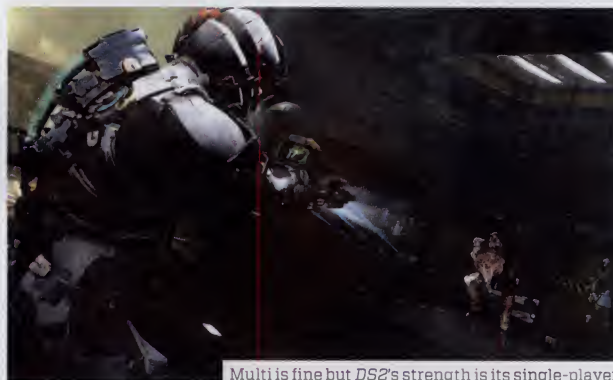
"Stab anything that has less than six limbs and feast on the goo inside. **No tutorial required**"

When you get down to the guts of the matter *Dead Space 2* online is fun in short bursts but is a fairly redundant addition to the package as a whole.

Any initial feelings of fear and intensity you get are quickly replaced with minor irritation directed at your less-than-zippy human avatar and the cheapness of your enemies. This isn't bad online gaming, but it certainly isn't great. **Adam Mathew**

### VERDICT

Decent four-on-four online action but only the most dedicated *Dead Space* devotees are going to stick around for the long term.



Multi is fine but *DS2*'s strength is its single-player





**FREE** to join  
to play



# SOCOM SPECIAL FORCES

[illegible]

**FULL COMMAND, FULL ASSAULT, ITS TIME TO SEIZE CONTROL.**

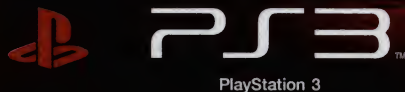
**A renegade army. A power hungry general. A country on the brink of collapse. Take full control of the battlefield with PlayStation®Move<sup>†</sup> enhanced accuracy to overturn a brutal revolution and prevent the spread of global chaos.**



## Strong war violence, Gaming experience may change online



**APRIL 2011**  
socom.com



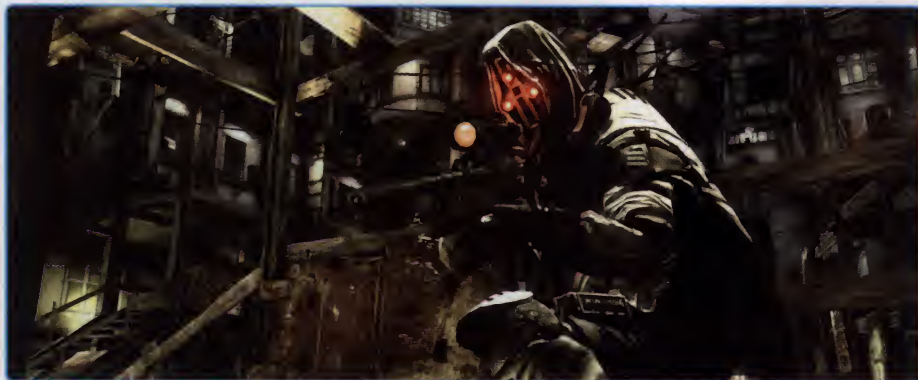
**SONY**  
make.believe



► TEST YOUR METTLE!

# The Hardest Trophies

Want to prove you've got the PlayStation minerals? Having these Trophies in your cabinet will show the world that, when it comes to games, you eat steel and shit nails. Have we missed any near-impossible Trophies? Write in and let us know.



## ◀ Killzone 2

Heroic Survivor

**Complete all missions on Elite difficulty.**

Beating *Killzone 2* on Elite difficulty is hard. You can only take a couple of shots before dying and the AI is brutal. You can pick your way through most of the game with skill and patience but everything goes to hell in a hand grenade when you enter the Autarch's Sanctum. Clear a weekend: this is going to take a while. Our hatred of Rico stems from this Trophy; he's absolutely no help whatsoever. Enemies swarm all over you in waves of increasing difficulty, culminating in the dreaded Rocket Launcher guys. After killing his soldiers you still have to liquidate Radec himself – who will cut you down if you don't turn around quick enough.

## Wipeout HD ►

Zone Zeus

**In Zone Mode, reach Zone 75 on any track.**

It's not a clever name. You just need to be a divine being to actually do it. In Zone Mode your ship starts out at a slow speed with full shields and each 10 seconds, your ship accelerates a little. The Trophy requires you to survive long enough to reach Zone 75. The problem is that even by the time you reach Zone 50 your ship will be travelling so fast nothing this side of a hummingbird on uppers has the required reflexes to steer it. Even if a mortal being could reach level 75 by the time they did their brain would be mush and they'd spend the rest of their lives in a *Wipeout* trance, peeing their pants.



## ◀ Wipeout HD

Beat Zico

**Equal or beat the lap time of 30.82 seconds on Anulpha Pass (Forward), Speed Lap, Venom using the Piranha.**

It's *Wipeout HD* again and somehow this Trophy is even harder. In order to snare this Trophy you have to nail a perfect lap in every sense of the word. One single degree of microscopic miscalculation will result in failure by a fraction of a second. In the future, during the War with the Machines, Skynet will send back robots to our time that would still be unable to win this Trophy.



## ▶ Rock Band 2

The Bladder of Steel Award

**Completed the Endless Setlist 2 without pausing or failing**

This can be done on any difficulty but it's still one tough bikkie of a Trophy. To earn it you need to complete 84 songs straight: no rests, no dunny breaks, no phone calls, and no nose scratching. You can't pause and you can't fail a song. By the time you finish guitarist's wrists will have seized up, drummers biceps will be made of lava and their feet will fall off and singers will speak like Darren Lockyer for a week.

## ◀ Call of Duty: World at War

For the Motherland

**Complete 'Heart of the Reich' on Veteran difficulty.**

The stress of Veteran difficulty in *Call of Duty: World at War* will send you bald and put grey hairs on your balls. When Adam completed it we've since been convinced Adam is a warlock, or at least some kind of mid-level sorcerer. The Storm the Plaza checkpoint is, without doubt, the most infuriating section. Stop to take a breath and enemies will spam you with so many grenades you won't know where to run. Seriously, the Nazis lob these things like explosive confetti. This one will send you to bed in tears.





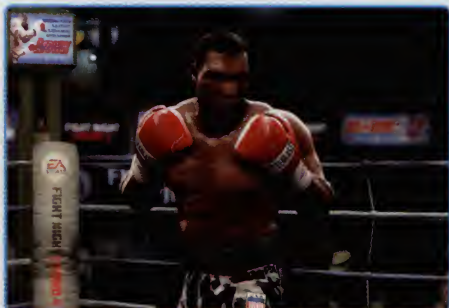


## ▲ Super Stardust HD

Late Boomer

**Get 15 bombs**

We're pretty sure this is a joke Trophy. It has to be a test to identify potential national security threats because anyone who can do this needs to be on the government payroll before a supervillain recruits them. This Trophy literally takes hundreds of attempts, and it's only attainable by using the bombs you are trying to get, just to get more bombs.



## ▲ Fight Night Round 4

XXL

**Win the heavyweight championship belt in online world championship mode**

Top of the leaderboard Trophies should be banned. They're just not realistic. To win the Heavyweight championship belt online you have to be first place in the world. With the amount of gamers certainly exceeding the number of real heavyweight champions winning this Trophy is even more mathematically improbable than winning an actual heavyweight championship belt.

## Warhawk▶

General

**Achieve a rank of General**

To reach this rank you need 275,000 points. An average game might land you a score of between 50 and 200 points. At 30 minutes long, then, you'd need to play over 5000 games to reach that level.

## ▼ Call of Duty: Classic

War Hero

**Complete the game on Veteran Difficulty**

This one is tough as hell because the original *Call of Duty* harks from an era before sissy regenerating health. A couple of hits and you're toast.

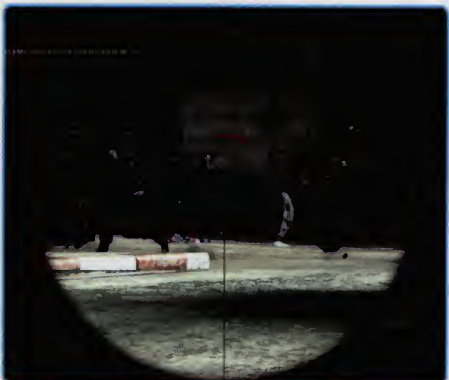


## ▲ Guitar Hero Metallica

Creeping Death

**Score 575,000 points on 'Creeping Death' with guitar**

To score 575,000 points on 'Creeping Death' on guitar you basically need to nail the song 100 per cent on Expert. If that still doesn't sound difficult then we don't believe you're particularly familiar with the musical stylings of Metallica. Close enough is not good enough either; even 99 per cent doesn't seem like enough to get over the line. Insane.

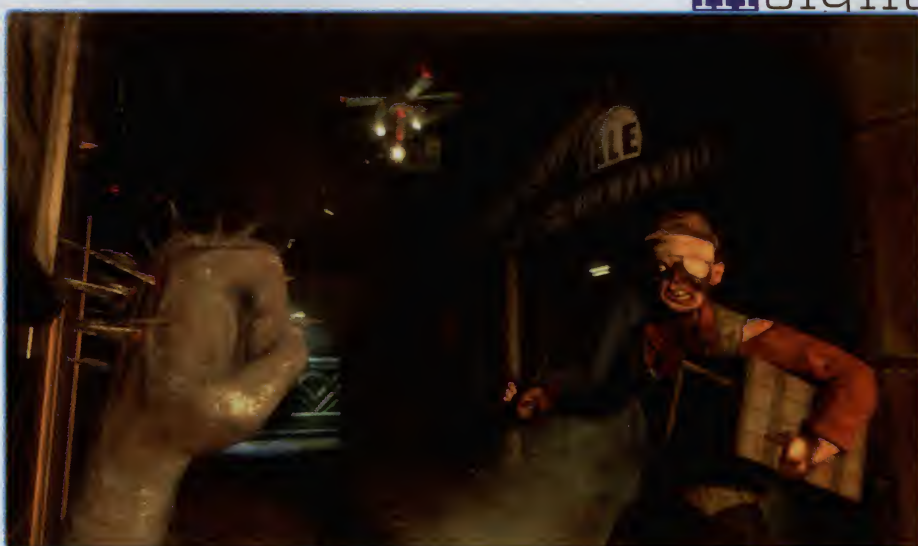


## ▲ SOCOM Confrontation

Silver Star

**20 MVP Awards, 1000 Kills, 15 Consecutive Kills Without Taking Damage, 100 Headshots, 200 Games On The Winning Side, Bronze Star, Stealth Medal**

There are a lot of things to do to get this Trophy, none more difficult than getting 15 consecutive kills without taking damage. To get 15 kills in one match would already be an impressive achievement. Doing it without taking a single bit of damage? Are you kidding?



## ▲ BioShock

I Chose the Impossible

**Complete the game on Survivor difficulty without using a Vita-chamber**

Don't have much on your plate at the moment? Try this Trophy. You've still got plenty of time until *BioShock Infinite* comes out. To earn the suitably named 'I Chose the Impossible' Trophy you need to complete *BioShock* without continuing. Thankfully the game does allow you to reload saved games but you need bill-paying skills and the patience of a monk to get this Trophy.



## ▼ Street Fighter IV

Playing to Win

**Win 10 ranked matches in a row.**

Street Fighter savants can snare this one without too much fuss, but that goes without saying. That's like saying Hulk Hogan could walk into a bar and win 10 arm-wrestles with strangers. Pretty likely. Us normal folk, however? No chance.





### ► MUST WATCH

## Red

(M)

**DIRECTOR:** ROBERT SCHWENTKE **CAST:** BRUCE WILLIS, MARY-LOUISE PARKER, KARL URBAN, JOHN MALKOVICH, HELEN MIRREN, BRIAN COX, MORGAN FREEMAN  
**AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

Former CIA Black-Ops agent Frank Moses (Willis) whiles away his days in solitude, his only contact Sarah, a customer service representative managing his pension. However, when shady forces within the government mark the RED (Retired, Extremely Dangerous) Moses for death, the CIA may just have bitten off more than they can chew. After dispatching a hit squad with ease, Frank heads to Kansas to protect Sarah, fearing she'll be used as bait to flush him out. Narrowly dodging the zealous Agent Cooper (Urban), he reunites with some elderly but staunch allies to uncover why they've been targeted, who's behind it and making them pay. Willis is fantastically assisted by Malkovich's crazed antics, Mirren as Wetworks specialist Victoria, Morgan Freeman as the charming Joe Matheson and Brian Cox's dapper Russian agent, Ivan Simanov.

Watch this if you like *Taken*, *The Losers*, *Shooter* or *The Bourne Ultimatum*

### Verdict

Fun, over-the-top action with slide in its stride and a snap in its step. A smart comic book movie even your gran would enjoy.

# 8



Old people. They'll kick your arse

"Fun, over-the-top action with slide in its stride and a snap in its step"



## Ghostbusters

(PG)

**DIRECTOR** IVAN REITMAN **CAST** DAN AKROYD, BILL MURRAY, HAROLD RAMIS, ERNIE HUDSON  
**AVAILABLE (RENT)** \$3.99, **(OWN)** \$12.99, 1640MB (SD)

Three unemployed parapsychology professors set up shop as a unique ghost removal servicer. Sounds like a stupid premise on paper, but on celluloid it is one of the best things to come out of the '80s.

According to some after-the-fact testimonies from the director and fellow cast members, Bill Murray was at his ad-libbing best whilst playing Pete Venkman.

Flanked by Ray Stantz (Dan Akroyd), Egon Spengler (Harold Ramis) and Winston Zeddemore (Ernie Hudson) these unlikely exterminators tear Manhattan apart as they

race to thwart a demigod who wants to turn Sigourney Weaver into a dog and enslave mankind via marshmallow.

Watch this if you like *Bill Murray*

**Verdict** Still punchy and the effects are pretty good considering the films age. Get slimed, today.

# 9

### PlayStation®Store

#### ► TOP TEN

## Movies on Demand



- 1 **Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps** Fox
- 2 **Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'hoole** Warner Bros.
- 3 **Despicable Me** Universal
- 4 **The Sorcerer's Apprentice** Disney
- 5 **Centurion** Hopscotch
- 6 **The Karate Kid** Sony
- 7 **Salt** Sony
- 8 **Zodiac** Warner Bros.
- 9 **Scott Pilgrim vs. The World** Universal
- 10 **Going the Distance** New Line

## Now available to rent or own on PlayStation®Store

The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!





## The Town (MA15+)

**DIRECTOR:** BEN AFFLECK **CAST:** BEN AFFLECK, JEREMY RENNER, JON HAMM, REBECCA HALL, BLAKE LIVELY, PETE POSTLETHWAITE **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

Ben Affleck takes the reins of this gritty heist thriller with a surprising amount of heart. Juggling writing, acting and directorial duties, he moves from strength to strength with the entire city of Boston his muse.

A usually meticulous crew of bank robbers barely escape their latest job intact, as they use hostages for leverage, duck interrogation, line-ups and an FBI agent hard on their trail. Brothers in arms, Doug MacRay (Ben Affleck) and James "Jem" Coughlin (Jeremy Renner) butt heads over a risky quick-turnaround score as Jem's casual violence and Doug's desire to walk away from the life are at odds. Adding gasoline to the fire is Doug's burgeoning relationship with bank manager Claire Keesey (Rebecca Hall), who has no idea he took her hostage in a previous robbery.

Watch this if you like *Heat*

**Verdict** Compelling viewing with a return to form by Ben Affleck and a brilliant supporting cast.

9



## Machete (MA15+)

**DIRECTOR:** ROBERT RODRIGUEZ **CAST:** DANNY TREJO, JESSICA ALBA, STEVEN SEAGAL, MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ, DON JOHNSON, LINDSAY LOHAN, ROBERT DE NIRO **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

The huge response to the fake trailer for *Machete* in the *Deathproof/Grindhouse* double feature was the catalyst that gave this project life, and so the world's first Mex-ploitation film was born. Forget about burdening yourself with pesky things like plot; this is a rollicking rollercoaster ride of revenge as former Federale Machete is set up, gunned down and left for dead. Assisted by the mysterious Luz (Michelle Rodriguez), the sextacular Agent Rivera (Jessica Alba) and a shotgun-wielding Padre (Cheech Marin), a combined conspiracy comprised of rednecks, drug lords and a US senator will be ruling the day they crossed his path. With a finale that sets Machete versus Torrez in a battle of the blades, played with chunky brilliance by Steven Seagal, the appeal is almost impossible to resist.

Watch this if you like *Desperado*, *The Expendables*

**Verdict** Rodriguez's intentional B-grade makes everything else look Z-grade. Kick back, relax and enjoy.

9



## Jackass 3 (MA15+)

**DIRECTOR:** JEFF TREMAINE **CAST:** JOHNNY KNOXVILLE, BAM MARGERA, RYAN DUNN, STEVE-O, CHRIS PONTIUS, WEE MAN, PRESTON LACY, EHREN MCGHEHEY, DAVE ENGLAND, LOOMIS FALL, TONY HAWK, SPIKE JONZE, SEANN WILLIAM SCOTT **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

It's been a while between drinks for the *Jackass* crew. They're all a little older; none the wiser and we can't help but look at the timing of this release skeptically, coinciding with the launch of Margera's Spike TV show *Bam's World Domination*. Those thoughts all went out the window though, as Wee Man's midget bar fight made us laugh, the gang's prison break re-enactment through a corridor of cattle-prods and tasers made us cry and Steve-O's reverse bungee jump in a portapotty made us hurl. The non-stop barrage of train wreck skits and insane stunts will have you glued to the screen, especially the ones you know are just designed to hurt. This is not for the faint of heart.

Watch this if you like *Jackass*, *Jackass 2*

**Verdict** The guys have still got gross outs and stunts down to an art form with irresistible appeal.

7



## Due Date (MA15+)

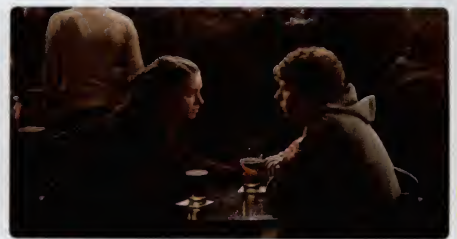
**DIRECTOR:** TODD PHILLIPS **CAST:** ROBERT DOWNEY, JR., ZACH GALIFIANAKIS, MICHELLE MONAGHAN, JAMIE FOXX, JULIETTE LEWIS, DANNY MCBRIDE, RZA **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

Peter Highman (Downey, Jr.) is on his way home from Atlanta to LA to be present at the birth of his first child, a scheduled C-section. Unfortunately Ethan Tremblay (Galifianakis), who is sitting behind Peter in first class, inadvertently has Peter shot by an air marshal with a rubber bullet. Both Peter and Ethan are forced off the plane before take-off. After being placed on the No Fly List, and realising he left his wallet on the plane, Peter reluctantly agrees to travel with Ethan to LA by road. It's good enough for a few good chuckles but as far as a follow-up to *The Hangover* it's a slight let-down. Todd Phillips has fashioned *Due Date* into a decent road comedy but we expected a little more.

Watch this if you like *The Hangover*, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*

**Verdict** Good enough, but not quite as good as you'd expect from the talented cast and director.

7



## The Social Network (M)

**DIRECTOR:** DAVID FINCHER **CAST:** ESSIE EISENBERG, JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE, ANDREW GARFIELD, ARMIE HAMMER. **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

An intriguing peek at the creators of the Facebook phenomenon, with all the backstabbing, jealousy and infighting you'd expect. Jessie Eisenberg plays founder Mark Zuckerberg brilliantly, with detached narcissism, douchebaggery and dysfunctional relationship behaviour. The Aaron Sorken screenplay is punchy and delivered at a breakneck pace as these college teen geniuses take sentence fencing to new heights, the likes of which haven't been seen since the ridiculously unrealistic *Dawson's Creek*. Special mention must be made of Armie Hammer's performance, with most moviegoers oblivious that the actor played both of the Winklevoss twins, with his head digitally mapped onto a body double.

Watch this if you like *Facebook*

**Verdict** Extremely watchable, though not quite worthy of a "Film of the Year" status update.

8



## The American (MA15+)

**DIRECTOR:** ANTON CORBIJN **CAST:** GEORGE CLOONEY, VIOLANTE PLACIDO, THEKIA REUTEN, PAOLA BONACELLI, JOHNA LEYSEN **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

Retired assassin and custom arms maker, Jack (Clooney) has his quiet little life in Sweden turned upside when he is tracked down by former adversaries. After the shocking death of his lover Ingrid, he flees to the remote town of Castelvocchio in Italy at the request of an old associate. Befriended by an old priest, who senses his troubled past, Jack wrestles with the man he once was and the man he wishes to be. His evolving relationship with local prostitute, Clara, forces him to reevaluate his life and the direction he's headed. Coerced to complete one final crafting job, he slowly begins to realise that escaping his past will be far more difficult than he ever could have imagined.

Watch this if you like *Munich*, *3 Days of the Condor*

**Verdict** An impressive display of range by Clooney and deliberate pacing make this essential viewing.

9



## ▶ MUST WATCH

# Conviction

**DIRECTOR:** TONY GOLDWYN **CAST:** HILARY SWANK, MINNIE DRIVER, SAM ROCKWELL, JULIETTE LEWIS  
**IN CINEMAS:** NOW

**K**enny Waters (Rockwell) is serving a life sentence for the murder of a waitress in Massachusetts and strongly denies the accusation. His sister, Betty Anne (Swank) is convinced he's innocent and begins an incredible journey to free her brother.

Betty Anne is a highschool dropout, married with kids and dirt poor when her brother was convicted. Kenny has a temper and his reputation meant he was one of the first people to be questioned, and while an initial lack of evidence clears him a few ex-girlfriends, one played with extraordinary depth by Lewis, appear in court to testify against him. Toss in a couple of corrupt cops and you have a guy who's left behind bars.

So Betty Anne decides to stick up for her brother, and begins the process of proving his innocence, by going back to high school, then to college, earning a law degree and then passing the bar in a couple of states to fight for him. The process takes over a decade.

Before you think we're giving too much away, this drama is based on real-life events though it obviously takes a few artistic liberties. The ending, too, has been altered but while you can find out Kenny's circumstances the movie keeps the tension going towards the finale.

Swank does well in roles where she plays the beaten-down character; she was phenomenal in *Million Dollar Baby*, and she's intense here too. Rockwell is absorbing as a guy who is banking on his sister's success, and each time an obstacle comes up you can see him slowly fading away.

Heavy going, but a ripping story. Recommended.

Watch this if you like *Erin Brockovich*,  
*The Shawshank Redemption*



"His sister, Betty Anne is convinced he's innocent, and begins an incredible journey to free her brother"



"Spider-Man, help!"

# 127 Hours

**DIRECTOR:** DANNY BOYLE **CAST:** JAMES FRANCO **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

**T**his is the true story of Aron Ralston (Franco), a American hiker who accidentally dislodged a boulder and became stuck between it and a canyon wall for five days. You may have already heard of him, as he had to amputate his own right arm to escape. Think about that next time you stub your toe and collapse to the ground like an Italian soccer player. Dude had to cut off his own arm.

Sorry if we ruined it but, again, it's based on fact (in other news, the Titanic always sinks and Apollo 13 always makes it back).

Ralston didn't tell anybody he was going on the trip and faced the very real and likely prospect he was going to die.

He did, however, pack a digital camera and a video camera, and filmed his last goodbyes. This is a film that will give you the shivers.

You'd think a movie about a bloke stuck in a cave for five days would be pretty monotonous, but director Boyle has crafted a stylish and gripping film as he dives into Ralston's fantasies and delusions during his time underground. Though you know the plot the way it's presented is enough to make this worth watching multiple times, and we dare you to watch the final, climatic scene without covering your eyes.

Bonus points to Franco for being a charming and convincing lead: this is probably the defining performance of his career.



Eastwood movies should just have him kicking hoodlums in the face

# Hereafter

**DIRECTOR:** CLINT EASTWOOD **CAST:** MATT DAMON, CECILE DE FRANCE **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

**W**e wonder if Clint Eastwood is pondering his own mortality with *Hereafter*, a story about what happens in life after death: the octogenarian turns 81 in May.

Three separate stories intertwine in *Hereafter*. French TV journalist Marie LeLay (de France) is holidaying with her boyfriend in south-east Asia when the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami hits and her life changes forever.

A London schoolboy Marcus (Frankie McLaren) loses his twin brother, Jason (George McLaren), in unexpected and sudden circumstances. He becomes obsessed with contacting psychics and discovering if there is an afterlife.

Finally, George Lonegan (Damon) is a construction worker living in San Francisco. He's trying to suppress a talent for hearing dead people, calling it a 'curse'. Eastwood shows he's not in a hurry to develop the story and it takes a while to get going, as the characters develop and endear themselves to audiences. You might not be convinced about an afterlife when the credits roll but it's still a worthwhile flick for a lazy Sunday afternoon.



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# index

## ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

### ACTION

**50 Cent: Blood on the Sand** 7  
SWORDFISH STUDIOS  
So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.

**Army of Two** 7  
EA MONTREAL  
Solid co-op thrills make up for its wasted potential.

**Army of Two: The 40th Day** 7  
EA MONTREAL  
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the first.

**Avatar** 7  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.

**RECOMMENDED Bayonetta** 9  
PLATINUM GAMES  
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

**Bionic Commando** 7  
GRIN  
There are some great moments, but they're few and far between.

**The Bourne Conspiracy** 7  
HIGH MOON STUDIOS  
Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish, superficial.

**The Club** 8  
BIZARRE CREATIONS  
Original, compulsive and fun.

**Damnation** 3  
BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT  
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

**Dark Sector** 7  
DIGITAL EXTREMES  
Solid but hardly perfect.

**Dark Void** 6  
AIRTIGHT GAMES  
Unimpressive graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.



**DEAD RISING 2** 9  
DEVELOPER: BLUE CASTLE GAMES  
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-4

"You'll wear a stupid grin pretty much from start to finish and it's a riot in co-op. A must-play. The satisfaction of literally cutting down thousands of zombies with anything you can pick up is its only hook - but it works a treat."

**Dead to Rights: Retribution** 6  
VOLATILE GAMES  
Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.

**Devil May Cry 4** 7  
CAPCOM  
Memorable bosses but too much backtracking spoils things.

**Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard** 6  
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE  
Great concept and nice parody, but basic one-play stuff.

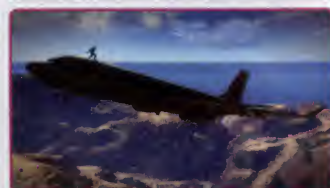
**Front Mission Evolved** 7  
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES  
Likable but limited mech-based combat.

**Genji: Days of the Blade** 5  
GAME REPUBLIC  
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

**RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game** 9  
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE  
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

**Iron Man** 3  
SECRET LEVEL  
Filled to the brim with bugs. Substandard.

**John Woo Presents: Stranglehold** 7  
MIDWAY CHICAGO  
Packs frantic *Max Payne*-lite fun.



**JUST CAUSE 2** 9  
DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS  
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS  
PLAYERS: 1

"Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. Why don't you already own this game? If you can dream it, you can do it in this insane action game."

**Kane & Lynch: Dead Men** 6  
IO INTERACTIVE  
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.

**Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days** 7  
IO INTERACTIVE  
Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

**Lost Planet: Extreme Condition** 6  
CAPCOM / K2 LLC  
A half-arsed port you'd never bother with.

**Lost Planet 2** 7  
CAPCOM  
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

**Mercenaries 2: World in Flames** 8  
PANDEMIC STUDIOS  
Weak in many areas but has fun in spades. *The Saboteur* does it better, though.

**Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight** 3  
NAMCO BANDAI  
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

**Ninja Gaiden Sigma** 8  
TEAM NINJA  
A treasure trove of gaming goodness. And violence.

**RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2** 8  
TEAM NINJA  
A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's been cut.

**RECOMMENDED Prototype** 8  
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT  
A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of guilty fun.

**RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla** 9  
VOLITION, INC.  
The best destruction effects ever, hands down.

**Saints Row 2** 9  
VOLITION, INC.  
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

**SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation** 6  
SLANT SIX GAMES  
A sturdy effort that fails to excite.

**Terminator Salvation** 4  
GRIN / HALCYON GAMES  
An abysmal failure. Short, filled with glitches.

**Time Crisis: Razing Storm** 6  
NAMCO  
Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

**Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2** 8  
RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT  
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

**Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen** 6  
LUXOFLUX  
A day of undemanding fun but no more.

**Transformers: War for Cybertron** 7  
HIGH MOON  
Good multiplayer, and that's about it.

**RECOMMENDED Vanquish** 8  
PLATINUM GAMES  
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

**Wanted: Weapons of Fate** 5  
GRIN  
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

**RECOMMENDED Warhawk** 9  
INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO  
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on flight night.

**WET** 8  
A2M  
Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance.

**Wheelman** 6  
MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS  
Rubbish low-speed handling and underdone throughout.

**X-Men Origins: Wolverine** 7  
RAVEN SOFTWARE  
A head slicin' chest beater of a slash 'em up.

### ACTION-ADVENTURE

**3D Dot Game Heroes** 7  
FROM SOFTWARE  
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

**Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom** 7  
GAME REPUBLIC  
A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned.

**RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed** 10  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
A landmark, though slightly dated now.

**RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed II** 9  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

**ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood** 10  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
The pinnacle of the series so far, and the multiplayer is outstanding.

**RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum** 8  
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS  
Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever. Best superhero game full stop.

**RECOMMENDED Brutal Legend** 9  
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS  
Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God.

**RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow** 9  
MERCURY STEAM  
Easily one of the best games of 2010.

**Clash of the Titans** 4  
GAME REPUBLIC  
A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.

**RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno** 8  
VISCERAL GAMES  
Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

**RECOMMENDED Darksiders** 8  
VIGIL GAMES  
It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.

**RECOMMENDED Dead Space** 9  
EA REDWOOD SHORES  
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

**RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2** 9  
VISCERAL GAMES  
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

**Demon's Souls** 7  
FROM SOFTWARE  
Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

**RECOMMENDED Enslaved** 8  
NINJA THEORY  
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was.

**Fairytale Fights** 7  
PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY  
Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

**Folklore** 8  
GAME REPUBLIC  
Original and surprising with moments of genius.

**The Godfather: The Don's Edition** 6  
EA REDWOOD SHORES  
It made for a decent PS2 game but skip this port. It's not worth it

### What a square



Consider some of the biggest open worlds. *GTA IV*'s Liberty City was a dense 27 square kilometres. The tiny slice of Africa in *Far Cry 2* hit 50 square kilometres. Kicking it up was Panau in *Just Cause 2*, an action-packed 1036 square kilometres. However, the abysmal *Fuel* is an enormous 14,400 square kilometres. Pity it sucked.



## For what it's Worthington

Former brickie turned Hollywood cash machine Sam Worthington has apologised to fans who were disappointed with the remake of *Clash of the Titans* and has promised the second will be better. "I think I can act f--king better, to be honest," he says. You're too hard on yourself Worthington; if you want to see properly shonky acting check out the emotionless plank they got to replace you in the videogame.



**The Godfather II**  
EA REDWOOD SHORES  
Starts as a decent crime caper but alienates fans of the film. Play *Mafia II* instead.

**ESSENTIAL God of War III**  
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES  
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

**RECOMMENDED God of War Collection**  
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES  
Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately.

**Golden Axe: Beast Rider**  
SECRET LEVEL  
Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!

**ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV**  
ROCKSTAR NORTH  
The technical scope and scale of *GTAIV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.



## GRAND THEFT AUTO: EPISODES FROM LIBERTY CITY

**DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR NORTH  
**PUBLISHER:** ROCKSTAR **PLAYERS:** 1-16  
"Superior to *GTAIV* in many ways with two new and more interesting single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer options and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please."

**Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince**  
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO  
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

**Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix**  
EA UK  
The chore-like structure will bore most.

**Heavenly Sword**  
NINJA THEORY  
Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.

**RECOMMENDED inFamous**  
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS  
A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox.

**LEGO Batman**  
TRAVELLER'S TALES  
Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

**LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4**  
TRAVELLER'S TALES  
The most thorough LEGO universe yet. More exploration than combat.

**RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures**  
TRAVELLER'S TALES  
Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

**Lost: Via Domus**  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

**RECOMMENDED Mafia II**  
2K CZECH  
Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

**ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots**  
KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS  
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game, but the production values are insane. A titan amongst games. Epic.

**Overlord: Raising Hell**  
4J STUDIOS / TRIUMPH STUDIOS  
A bundle of fun, mixing tactics with a juvenile love of chaos.

**Overlord II**  
TRIUMPH STUDIOS  
Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

**Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End**  
EUROCOM  
Looks the part but unfortunately it doesn't ever play the part.

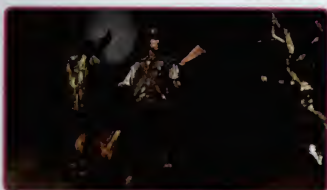
**Planet 51**  
PYRO STUDIOS  
Like a dry cracker for dinner. Bland and boring, and no fun.

**Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands**  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Worth your time but better swordplay could've really helped.

**Prison Break**  
ZOOTFLY  
A below-average stealth game cobbled together on the cheap.

**RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time**  
INSOMNIAC GAMES  
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

**RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction**  
INSOMNIAC GAMES  
A bit wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.



## RED DEAD REDEMPTION

**DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO  
**PUBLISHER:** ROCKSTAR **PLAYERS:** 1-16  
"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played. We're not lying when we say it's better than *GTAIV* in a lot of crucial areas."

**RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5**  
CAPCOM  
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

**RECOMMENDED The Saboteur**  
PANDEMIC STUDIOS  
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

**SAW II: Flesh & Blood**  
ZOMBIE INC.  
Lacks finesse but boasts some decent puzzles.

**Silent Hill Homecoming**  
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES  
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

**The Simpsons Game**  
EA REDWOOD SHORES  
Short, but the cromulent visuals embiggen the experience.

**Sonic the Hedgehog**  
SONIC TEAM  
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

**Sonic Unleashed**  
SONIC TEAM  
Hey! It's the least awful Sonic game in years!

**Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions**  
BEENOX  
Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

**Spider-Man: Web of Shadows**  
TREYARCH / SHABA GAMES  
Swift and tidy but not exactly deep.

**Star Wars: The Force Unleashed**  
LUCASARTS  
Fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

**Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II**  
LUCASARTS  
Gets a point-and-a-bit for hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

**RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent**  
UBISOFT SHANGHAI  
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

**Toy Story 3**  
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE  
Cute, simple, and charming as hell.

**ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune**  
NAUGHTY DOG  
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

**ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves**  
NAUGHTY DOG  
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

**Viking: Battle for Asgard**  
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY  
Slow attacks and weak visuals but it has its appeal.

**Yakuza 3**  
AMUSEMENT VISION  
Lots to do but the slow pace grates.

## ADVENTURE

**RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain**  
QUANTIC DREAM  
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

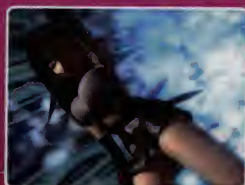
**Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust**  
TEAM17 SOFTWARE  
An amazing new low for this generation.

## FIGHTING

**Battle Fantasia**  
ARC SYSTEM WORKS  
A nice curiosity but, seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.



## THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



**FINAL FANTASY VII**  
**DEVELOPER:** SQUARE  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



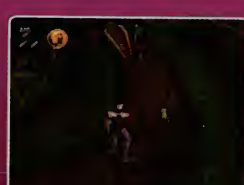
**DRIVER**  
**DEVELOPER:** REFLECTIONS  
**INTERACTIVE PLAYERS:** 1  
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through 3D cities may old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



**CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED**  
**DEVELOPER:** NAUGHTY DOG  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.



**SYPHON FILTER**  
**DEVELOPER:** EIDETIC  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
If you still think *Syphon Filter* was a MGS rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



**MEDIEVIL**  
**DEVELOPER:** SCE STUDIO  
**CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS:** 1  
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it better than most since.




**VISCERAL  
GAMES**
**inhouse**

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

# Visceral Games

**LOCATION:** REDWOOD SHORES, CALIFORNIA **FOUNDED:** 2009  
**BEST KNOWN FOR:** DEAD SPACE

Originally known as EA Redwood Shores when it was founded in 2001, the tagline for this studio is 'It's In Our Blood.' "We wanted to focus on quality, and give games the time they needed to be successful," says Shereif Fattouh, gameplay producer of *Dead Space 2* at Visceral Games. "We wanted to pioneer whatever game or genre that we were working on to be a benchmark in the industry. We thought that a re-branding was a good way to re-establish the identity of what Visceral was going to be about, and it meant a shift to mature rated titles."

The 'ready when it's done' approach is admirable, and for some studios it can bite them on the backside (*GTS*, anyone?). Before the name change, Redwood Shores made a trio of James Bond titles, as well as *The Simpsons Game*, as well as *The Godfather* and its sequel. It remains at Electronic Arts' company HQ in Redwood City, California, alongside other EA studios such as POGO, EA Partners and also shares the EA HQ with The Sims Studio. There are, however, Visceral Games branches at Montreal and Melbourne.

The studios biggest hits before the name change were 2003's *James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing* on PS2, and also 2006's *The Godfather*

on PS2 and PS3. Both of these third-person action games were generally well received by critics, and while *Everything or Nothing* had Redwood Shores all over it, EA Canada handled the vehicle sections.

After that, it was straight onto *Dead Space*, though still under the Redwood Shores nametag. "12 or 15 people had this idea, and it really felt like at the time there was a gap in the market for a [horror survival game]," continues Fattouh. "This was when we were transitioning from PS2 to PS3... We felt that it was an opportunity since these guys had a strong creative vision – and that's the most important thing you have to have when you're trying to pitch a new game idea is knowing what game you want to build." The name change happened while the studio was basking in the glow of *Dead Space*'s success.

There's been two 'proper' PS3 games made in the *Dead Space* franchise, as well as the ported on-rails shooter *Extraction*, and also an iPod specific title. While they also made *Dante's Inferno*, it seems that the team isn't done with *Dead Space*. "Yeah, it does seem that way, doesn't it!" says Fattouh with a grin.

**RECOMMENDED** *BlazBlue: Continuum Shift* 9  
 ARC SYSTEM WORKS  
 Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.

**FaceBreaker** 7  
 EA CANADA  
 Great look but very unbalanced.

**The Fight: Lights Out** 5  
 COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE  
 The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

**The King of Fighters XII** 3  
 SNK PLAYMORE  
 Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable.

**Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe** 7  
 MIDWAY GAMES  
 A fun game with mass appeal but not very technical.

**RECOMMENDED** *Soulcalibur IV* 8  
 NAMCO BANDAI  
 Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.

**RECOMMENDED** *Street Fighter IV* 10  
 CAPCOM / DIMPS  
 A tight-fisted gut blow of wow, but you'd grab *Super Street Fighter IV* instead now.



**SUPER STREET FIGHTER FIGHTER IV** 10  
 DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/DIMPS  
 PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2  
 "With the 'vanilla' versions vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay – but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price – *Super Street Fighter IV* belongs in everyone's collection."

**RECOMMENDED** *Tekken 6* 8  
 NAMCO BANDAI  
 Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

**TNA Impact!** 6  
 MIDWAY STUDIOS – LOS ANGELES  
 Arcade-style biff but needs more content.

**Virtua Fighter 5** 8  
 SEGA-AM2  
 As hardcore as fighting games get.

**WWE Legends of WrestleMania** 6  
 YUKE'S  
 Gets by on retro charm but feels absolutely ancient.

**WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010** 8  
 YUKE'S  
 If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

## FLYING

**Apache: Air Assault** 7  
 GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT  
 Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

**Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII** 7  
 UBISOFT ROMANIA  
 A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.

**Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII** 6  
 UBISOFT ROMANIA  
 Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

**Heroes Over Europe** 7  
 TRANSMISSION GAMES  
 A little rough but not bad. *IL-2* is much better, though.



**IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY** 8  
 DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT  
 PUBLISHER: AFA PLAYERS: 1-16  
 "Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've ever played."

**Lair** 5  
 FACTOR 5  
 It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply disappointing.

**Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.** 7  
 UBISOFT ROMANIA  
 Tight and accessible but a bit sterile.

**RECOMMENDED** *Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2* 8  
 UBISOFT ROMANIA  
 A top gun successor. More detail, better mission design.

## MUSIC

**AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack** 7  
 HARMONIX  
 Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.

## THE BEST PSP GAMES



**GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES**  
 DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEADS  
 PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're totally serious.



**MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE**  
 DEVELOPER: CAPCOM  
 PLAYERS: 1-4

*Monster Hunter* is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to and will reward you in spades if you're able to put the effort in.



**WIPEOUT PULSE**  
 DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL  
 PLAYERS: 1-8

Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just plps the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



**METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER**  
 DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS  
 PLAYERS: 1-6

A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*, this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



**GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA**  
 DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN  
 PLAYERS: 1

Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.



**Band Hero**  
NEVERSOFT  
Robust but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.

**RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band**  
HARMONIX  
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

**RECOMMENDED DJ Hero**  
FREESTYLEGAMES  
Tough to write off as a gimmick.

**RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2**  
FREESTYLEGAMES  
Some great Improvements and some excellent, unique mixes.

**RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band**  
HARMONIX  
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

**Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock**  
NEVERSOFT  
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.

**Guitar Hero World Tour**  
NEVERSOFT  
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.

**Guitar Hero 5**  
NEVERSOFT  
Improving, but the hipster tracklist is a dud.

**RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica**  
NEVERSOFT  
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

**Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits**  
BEENOX  
Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Seriously though, why wasn't it just DLC?

**Guitar Hero: Van Halen**  
UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT  
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it as a free bonus.

**Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock**  
NEVERSOFT  
Functional, but it just isn't evolving at the same rate as its peers.

**LEGO Rock Band**  
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES  
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

**RECOMMENDED Rock Band**  
HARMONIX  
The best party game ever, until the sequels.

**ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2**  
HARMONIX  
The best music game series around.

**RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3**  
HARMONIX  
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

**SingStar**  
SCE LONDON STUDIO  
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

## PARTY

**EyePet**  
SCE LONDON STUDIO  
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

**Hail to the Chimp**  
WIDELOAD GAMES  
Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

**Kung Fu Rider**  
JAPAN STUDIO  
Waggle-based bullshit. A terrible example of a Move game.

**Scene It? Bright Lights! Big Screen!**  
A2M  
Vanilla compared to the past Xbox versions.

**The Shoot**  
COHORT STUDIOS  
A good Move rail shooter. Cool presentation.

**RECOMMENDED Sports Champions**  
ZINDAGI GAMES  
Despite a few quirks this is the must-have Move title.

**Start the Party!**  
SUPERMASSIVE GAMES  
Great to keep the rugrats amused for a while.

## PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

**RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever**  
NAMCO BANDAI  
Joyfulness, digitally realised. Infectious.

**RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet 2**  
MEDIA MOLECULE  
Like the original it's innovative and never-ending. Improves upon an amazing product.

**RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection**  
SUCKER PUNCH  
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

## RACING

**Blur**  
BIZARRE CREATIONS  
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

**RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise**  
CRITERION GAMES  
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

**RECOMMENDED Colin McRae: DiRT**  
CODEMASTERS  
Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

**Colin McRae: DiRT 2**  
CODEMASTERS  
Flashy and drives fine but it's style over substance here.

**Ferrari Challenge**  
EUTECHNYX  
Serious and robust but it won't trouble *Gran Turismo 5*.



## GRAN TURISMO 5

**DEVELOPER:** POLYPHONY DIGITAL  
**PUBLISHER:** SCE **PLAYERS:** 1-16  
"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

**Fuel**  
ASOBO STUDIOS  
Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked.

**Full Auto 2: Battlelines**  
PSEUDO INTERACTIVE  
Fun but shallow. You'd take *Split/Second* instead these days.

**RECOMMENDED F1 2010**  
CODEMASTERS  
A white-knuckle racer and an authentic title.

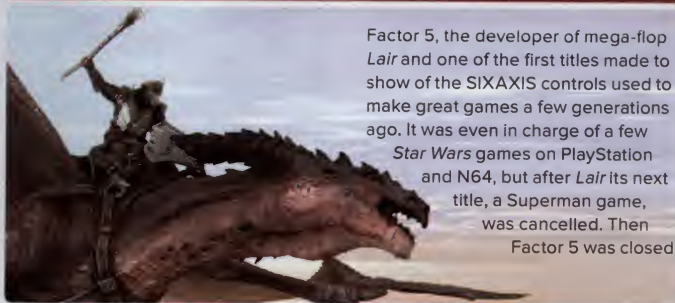
**Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights**  
JUICE GAMES  
Stout mechanics, glossy options. Not too deep though.

**Midnight Club: Los Angeles**  
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO  
Visually weak at times. Great customisation and seamless racing.

**RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers**  
UNITED FRONT GAMES  
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

**MotoGP 09/10**  
MONUMENTAL GAMES  
Simulation freaks will want to veer well away.

## Lame



**RECOMMENDED MotorStorm**  
EVOLUTION STUDIOS  
Fast, hard and dirty. In 2007 it was everything a racing game should be. Things have come on a bit since then though.

**MotorStorm: Pacific Rift**  
EVOLUTION STUDIOS  
Boasts spitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

**MX vs. ATV: Untamed**  
RAINBOW STUDIOS  
Feels like a PS2 port with no next gen goodness.

**MX vs. ATV Reflex**  
RAINBOW STUDIOS  
Motocross freaks will love it. Needed a little more zest though.

**RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit**  
CRITERION  
Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful arcade racing.

**RECOMMENDED Need for Speed: SHIFT**  
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS  
Superbly presented and a blast to play. Feels fast.

**Need for Speed: Undercover**  
EA BLACK BOX  
Technically faulty, and adds nothing good since *Most Wanted*.

**RECOMMENDED Pure**  
BLACK ROCK STUDIOS  
Still one of the best arcade racers on the market.

**RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID**  
CODEMASTERS  
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good, but lacks the *Race Driver* vintage, despite the name.

**SBK-X: Superbike World Championship**  
MILESTONE  
Inches in front of *MotoGP 09/10*. Purists may still hate on it.

**Sega Rally**  
SEGA RACING STUDIO  
Familiar, old-school arcade fun.

**Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing**  
SUMO DIGITAL  
Fun but shallow. Copies from the best but missing a crucial spark.

**RECOMMENDED Split/Second**  
BLACK ROCK STUDIO  
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

**Stuntman: Ignition**  
PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT  
The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour long orgasm.

**SuperCar Challenge**  
EUTECHNYX  
Admirable effort but feels a little bland despite the exotic cars.

**Superstars V8: Next Challenge**  
MILESTONE  
An improvement but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

**RECOMMENDED WRC**  
MILESTONE  
Drab graphics, imperfect sound, but a joyfully robust driving model.

Factor 5, the developer of mega-flop *Lair* and one of the first titles made to show off the SIXAXIS controls used to make great games a few generations ago. It was even in charge of a few *Star Wars* games on PlayStation and N64, but after *Lair* its next title, a Superman game, was cancelled. Then Factor 5 was closed.

## RPG/ACTION RPG

**Alpha Protocol**  
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT  
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

**Cross Edge**  
COMPILE HEART  
Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

**RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins**  
BIOWARE  
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

**ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion**  
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS  
Simply put: awesome.



## FALLOUT 3

**DEVELOPER:** BETHESDA **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS **PLAYERS:** 1  
"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing it into a post-apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly."

**RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas**  
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT  
A great ride but you've been on it before.

**RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII**  
SQUARE ENIX  
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action.

**Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2**  
VICARIOUS VISIONS  
A compelling romp but the button-mashing play needs updating.

**ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2**  
BIOWARE  
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi. An action RPG without peer.

**Nier**  
CAVIA UNRELEASED  
Decent enough, but there are richer experiences elsewhere.

**Resonance of Fate**  
TRI-ACE  
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

**Sacred 2: Fallen Angel**  
ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT  
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

**Valkyria Chronicles**  
SEGA WOW  
Strategy and RPG heads alike should not miss this game.

**White Knight Chronicles**  
LEVEL-5 / SCE JAPAN STUDIO  
Not a great way to spend 30-or-so hours.



## SHOOTER

**RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator** 9  
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS  
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever. Beyond brutal.

**RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company** 8  
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE  
Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

**RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2** 8  
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE  
A top-tier shooter but the single-player mischief is M.I.A.

**RECOMMENDED BioShock** 8  
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN  
14 months too late, but this is grown-up gaming at its best.

**RECOMMENDED BioShock 2** 9  
2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA  
Doesn't match the original's plot.

**BlackSite: Area 51** 5  
MIDWAY STUDIOS AUSTIN  
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.

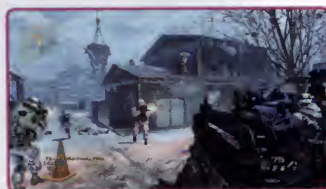


**BORDERLANDS** 9  
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE  
PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4  
"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better. It takes the best elements from RPGs and fuses them to a superb shooter. The result is quite simply the most rewarding co-op to date. The fact it's being supported by so much extra DLC, even this long after release, means it's great value for money too."

**RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway** 8  
GEARBOX SOFTWARE  
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.

**Call of Duty 3** 7  
TREYARCH  
Solid but surprisingly unspectacular.

**ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare** 10  
INFINITY WARD  
Relentlessly exciting. You'd have to be mental to miss this.



**MODERN WARFARE 2** 10  
DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD  
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION PLAYERS: 1-18  
"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Supremely crafted, *Modern Warfare 2* is, with its older brother, a high-watermark for this generation of shooters."

**RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops** 9  
TREYARCH  
A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

**ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War** 10  
TREYARCH  
A class act. War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies.

**Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood** 7  
TECHLAND  
A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter.

**RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena** 8  
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS  
Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

**Condemned 2: Bloodshot** 9  
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS  
Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

**RECOMMENDED The Darkness** 9  
STARBREEZE STUDIOS  
Stunning, original and gory as hell. Cross your fingers for a sequel because this rocks.

**F.E.A.R.**  
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS  
A chilling ride, but the graphics could've been sharper.

**F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin** 7  
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS  
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

**RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2** 8  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

**Haze** 6  
FREE RADICAL DESIGN  
Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal AI.

**ESSENTIAL Killzone 2** 10  
GUERRILLA GAMES  
Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.

**RECOMMENDED Killzone 3** 9  
GUERRILLA GAMES  
Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline. It's also a winner with Move.

**Legendary** 4  
SPARK UNLIMITED  
A rushed mess. Terrible.

**RECOMMENDED MAG** 9  
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE  
Shooter junkies take heed: this is where it's at for online combat.

**RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor** 8  
DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE  
Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

**Medal of Honor: Airborne** 6  
EA LOS ANGELES  
Short and lacks innovation. Too many problems.

**MindJack** 4  
FEELPLUS  
An ill-planned concept with awful execution. Buggy and boring, too.

**RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge** 8  
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE  
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

**Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising** 8  
CODEMASTERS  
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

**RECOMMENDED The Orange Box** 9  
EA UK / VALVE CORPORATION  
Get it for *Portal*, keep it for *Half-Life 2*.

**Quantum of Solace** 7  
TREYARCH  
Has too many faults to be compelling.

**RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man** 10  
INSOMNIAC GAMES  
A fantastic launch title with sweet weapons.

**RECOMMENDED Resistance 2** 9  
INSOMNIAC GAMES  
Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

**Rogue Warrior** 3  
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS  
A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

**Singularity** 7  
RAVEN SOFTWARE  
Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

**TimeShift** 6  
SABER INTERACTIVE  
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

**RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas** 9  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Slick, good-looking and utterly engaging.

**Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2** 7  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Doesn't quite feel as good or as cool as the first one.

**Turning Point: Fall of Liberty** 4  
SPARK UNLIMITED  
Scrappy throughout. Great concept, bogus execution.

**Unreal Tournament 3** 8  
EPIC GAMES  
Fast, twitchy online multiplayer shooting. No splitscreen though.

**Wolfenstein** 7  
RAVEN SOFTWARE / ID SOFTWARE  
Lacks soul but delivers Nazi-blasting action.

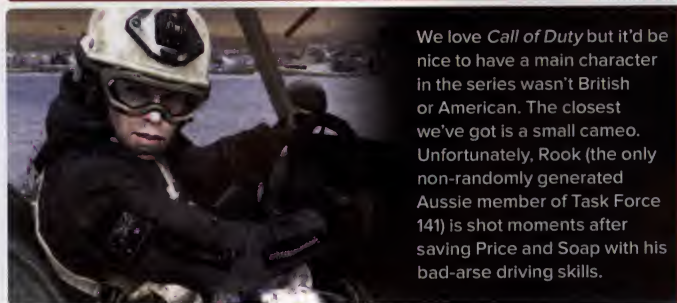
## SPORTS

**2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa** 7  
EA CANADA  
Blissful, *FIFA 10* football with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.

**Ashes Cricket 2009** 6  
TRANSMISSION GAMES  
Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for some multiplayer beauty.

**Backbreaker** 7  
NATURALMOTION  
Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

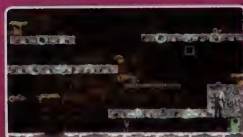
## Not much too Rook at



We love *Call of Duty* but it'd be nice to have a main character in the series wasn't British or American. The closest we've got is a small cameo. Unfortunately, Rook (the only non-randomly generated Aussie member of Task Force 141) is shot moments after saving Price and Soap with his bad-arse driving skills.



## THE BEST PSN GAMES ON PlayStation®Store



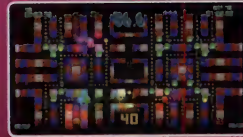
**BRAID**  
DEVELOPER: HOTHREAD  
PLAYERS: 1  
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man.



**PIXELJUNK SHOOTER**  
DEVELOPER: Q-GAMES  
PLAYERS: 1-2  
Take control of a tiny ship and navigate your way through various caverns, rescuing any survivors along the way. Of course, there's interesting gameplay mechanics thrown into the mix, such as fluid water and lava dynamics that need to be used to solve puzzles.



**FLIGHT CONTROL HD**  
DEVELOPER: FIREMINT  
PLAYERS: 1-4  
Possibly the most addictive and accessible PSN title available. The premise is simply to guide the aircraft on-screen to their respective runways. That's it – but you'll be totally hooked. One of the best games to play with PlayStation Move too.



**PAC-MAN CE DX**  
DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS  
PLAYERS: 1  
More than an update, this is a revolution. The 'CE' stands for 'Championship Edition', and is a mash of different maps and modes revolving around guiding Paccers through the dots and waiting ghosts. This is begging to be your new addiction.



**MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2**  
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM  
PLAYERS: 1-2  
It's by no means 'straight' *Street Fighter* though nor should it be. Stuffed with 56 characters this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done. If you're a fighting nut you should have this already.



## He's now a blue he was a red



Former Liverpool striker Fernando Torres, the fastest player in Liverpool history to score 50 league goals, joined Chelsea on January 31 – the final day of the 2011 Winter transfer window. Scousers have responded by burning their Torres shirts. At least they don't have to burn their copies of *FIFA 11* – the rosters are easily and regularly updated.

**Beijing 2008** 5  
EUROCOM  
Not the worst of its type but far from a game to buy and keep.

**EA Sports MMA** 7  
EA SPORTS  
Great controls but struggles to be convincing.



**FIFA 11** 9  
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA  
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22  
"While the hundreds of matches ahead may eventually bring this titan back to Earth with another wish-list of changes for *FIFA 12*, at the moment *FIFA 11* remains a bafflingly brilliant update. If you've skipped the last few *FIFA* updates boost the score by one. Seriously, it's that good. Essential."

**RECOMMENDED Fight Night Round 4** 9  
EA CANADA  
Runs like a dream. Technical and strategic, plus it looks absolutely brilliant.

**International Cricket 2010** 7  
TRICKSTAR GAMES  
Not the most comprehensive cricket game but certainly the best when you're on the pitch.

**John Daly's ProStroke Golf** 5  
GUSTO GAMES  
Those looking for a high production value golf game should give this the shaft.

**RECOMMENDED NBA 2K11** 8  
VISUAL CONCEPTS / KUSH GAMES  
Hard court high priest Michael Jordan stars in perhaps the best basketball game ever.

**NBA Jam** 8  
EA CANADA  
A faithful and fun update to the '90s classic.

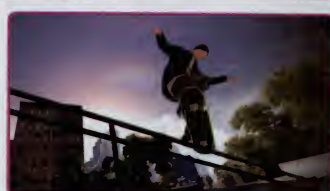
**Pro Evolution Soccer 2011** 8  
KONAMI  
Good for a goal fix, still second best overall. Get *FIFA 11*.

**Rugby League Live** 5  
BIG ANT  
Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate.

**Shaun White Skateboarding** 6  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

**Shaun White Snowboarding** 6  
UBISOFT MONTREAL  
Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

**RECOMMENDED Skate** 9  
EA BLACK BOX  
A well-balanced masterpiece and true *Tony Hawk* killer. Trumped by its sequels.



**SKATE 2** 9  
DEVELOPER: BLACK BOX  
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8  
"*Skate 2* is one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense and packed with natural lines and the balance is sublime."

**RECOMMENDED Skate 3** 8  
EA BLACK BOX  
Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

**Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09** 8  
EA TIBURON  
Still the only golf game worth owning.

**Tony Hawk's Project 8** 7  
NEVERSOFT  
No real reason to revisit this post-*Skate* at all.

**Tony Hawk's Proving Ground** 6  
NEVERSOFT  
Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

**Tony Hawk: RIDE** 4  
ROBOMODO  
Pure frustration made plastic.

**Top Spin 3** 8  
PAM DEVELOPMENT  
Realistic tennis with a steep learning curve. Rewarding, but needs time to master.

**RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010** 8  
YUKE'S  
The new undisputed baron of sports fighting.

**Vancouver 2010** 6  
EUROCOM  
A handful of events that last one afternoon.

**RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 2009** 8  
SUMO DIGITAL  
The top seed of tennis made even better. Great four player fun.

## STRATEGY

**RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution** 8  
FIRAXIS GAMES  
Great fun and shockingly addictive.

**RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E.** 8  
EUGEN SYSTEMS  
Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy. Better with Move, too.

**The Sims 3** 7  
THE SIMS STUDIO  
Waiting to pounce on the right type of gamer.

**Stormrise** 4  
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY  
A cack-handed, future war mess.

**Tom Clancy's EndWar** 7  
UBISOFT SHANGHAI  
Far from a finished product. Works, but it's hardly an essential purchase.

## infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

1999:  
R/C STUNT COPTER

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION GENRE: SIM DEVELOPER: SHINY ENTERTAINMENT  
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$10



A few months ago we highlighted *Ape Escape* on the PSone for its ingenious use of the DualShock. That game was launched at the same time as the now infamous and essential controller, and was a pitch perfect demonstration of exactly what was possible with Sony's cool new tech.

With the hardware specs in mind, you can see where the team where going with this. The dual, rotating sticks with 360 degrees of freedom are a keen match for a toy helicopter's remote control. If you put the two of them in a line-up, the DualShock would be doing time on behalf of \$4000 toy choppers destroyed by unfortunate klutzes.

*R/C Stunt Copter* promised 'speed, fun stunts & total radio control' and the back of the box told gamers "The more Stunts you perform, the more points you get, the cooler you are!!" The emphasis was all theirs.

A game about a toy chopper rather than a real one seems like a poor cousin, but this was a serious sim, despite the allure of speed and coolness. The condescending voice-over guy and his "colourful commentary!" betrayed the deep physics system within.

You needed extreme patience to keep these things at a steady level, and reefing on the sticks to pull off barrel rolls, loops and upside hovering was something that happened by fluke and with perspiration. The camera wasn't much help either, as it was from the viewpoint of a person

somewhere between being on the ground and hovering three or four metres in the air.

If your chopper went above a certain height all you'd see was the underside of the skids, and from there it was pretty easy to tip it upside down. Just imagine yourself standing on the ground, looking straight up in the air with your neck craned back, squinting into the sun and navigating one of these things through a set of goal posts. Now also imagine you're viewing the world in a 4:3 aspect ratio on a TV built before the Berlin Wall came down.

The actual 'game' part of this was divided into six core categories: slalom, shooting, stunt, hovering, landing and target. Of these, shooting, stunt and target were the most fun, and the rest were technical exercises.

There were some weird hardware issues too. To be truthful, we play tested this on a PS3 and at times the game's framerate would double, meaning the game would speed up. So instead of gracefully bringing the chopper up it would suddenly lurch skyward like it was part of a Benny Hill film clip. We're pretty sure this happened on the PSone as well.

So, yeah, hard game to play, but still admirable – just. Not really a sim before its time, though it would've benefited from being on PS2 and being more fun. It's been infinitely bettered by newer titles, ones that give you the chance to roll, loop and destroy a copter in much more spectacular fireballs.

## SHINY HAPPY PEOPLE

Dave Perry was the President of Shiny Entertainment. Perry. When he was more prominent in game development he was a character whose games at Shiny and other studios always had a sense of fun about them. *MDK* was one of Shiny's biggest titles, along with the macabre *Wild 9* and the iconic *Earthworm Jim*. Perry also made a surprisingly good platform game for McDonalds called *Mick and Mack: Global Gladiators*.



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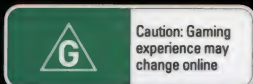
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